THE ORTHODOX WORD

No. 100

$2.50

Archbishop Averky of Jordanville

From this day, from this hour,
from this minute, let us strive
to love God above all,
and fulfill His holy will.

THE ORTHODOX WORD

For the Mission of True Orthodox Christianity

Established with the blessing of His Eminence the late *John (Maximovitch)*, Archbishop of Western America and San Francisco, Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

1981, vol. 17, nos. 5-6 (100-101)
September-December

ISSN 0030-5839

CONTENTS

193 The Hundredth Issue of *The Orthodox Word*

199 The Saint Herman Pilgrimages

205 The Future of Russia and the End of the World *by Hieromonk Seraphim*

219 Archbishop Averky: His Significance for the Ecumenical Orthodox Church

227 Translator's Introduction to Archbishop Averky's Commentary on the Apocalypse

237 The Apocalypse of St. John: An Orthodox Commentary *by Archbishop Averky*

251 The Apocalypse: Chapter One *by Archbishop Averky*

COVER: Fresco from the refectory of Dionysiou Monastery, Mt. Athos: *And there arose a smoke out of the pit. . . and there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth* (Apoc. 9:2-3).

THE ORTHODOX WORD, published bi-monthly by the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood. Second-class postage paid at Platina, Ca. Yearly subscription $8, two years $14, three years $18; students $5 per year. Office of publication: Beegum Gorge Road, Platina, Ca. All copies of all back issues and of individual articles are available from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI, 48106. Copyright 1981 by the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood. All inquiries should be directed to: THE ORTHODOX WORD, PLATINA, CALIFORNIA 96076, U.S.A.

ARCHBISHOP JOHN MAXIMOVITCH
1896 - 1966

THE 100TH ISSUE OF THE ORTHODOX WORD

Standing for True Orthodoxy in an Apocalyptic Age

May the Lord bless the preaching of the Orthodox Word. May this preaching serve for the strengthening of true Orthodox faith and Christian life in North America, with the help and the prayers of Blessed Father Herman of Alaska, whose sanctity was manifested on this continent, and the Aleut Martyr Peter, who suffered martyrdom in San Francisco.

Archbishop John
Epiphany of the Lord, 1965

In February, 1965, the first issue of a new Orthodox periodical appeared. Blessed by a holy man of our own times, Archbishop John Maximovitch, and given by him the name *The Orthodox Word*, this periodical took as its mission to give Orthodox Christians to eat of the living word of true Christianity. Its emphasis from the very beginning was on traditional Orthodox piety and teaching, leading to its rejection in some Orthodox circles as "out-of-date" in its acceptance of "old-fashioned" piety (saints, relics, miracles, etc.) and "fanatical" in its often outspoken opposition to ecumenism, Sergianism, and other modernistic currents in 20th-century Orthodoxy.

In time the publishers of this periodical, the lay Brotherhood of St. Herman of Alaska in San Francisco, moved to the forested mountains of northern California, becoming a monastic brotherhood just at the time of St. Herman's glorification (1970) and continuing its activity in accordance with the wish expressed by Archbishop John before his repose that it be a monastic community far from the world and its passions but at the same time missionary in emphasis. With its increased publication activity

in both English and Russian, its missions in several towns of northern California and Oregon, and its pilgrimages for the Orthodox faithful (see article below), the St. Herman of Alaska Monastery, in its humble way, has tried to fulfill this testament of Archbishop John.

The Brotherhood of St. Herman was born in the bosom of the Russian Church Outside Russia and has fully lived the life of this Church in the 18 years of its existence. Thus, *The Orthodox Word* in its pages has reflected the confession of true Orthodoxy to be found in the "Sorrowful Epistles" of Metropolitan Philaret, the Chief Hierarch of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, and other warnings directed to the local Orthodox Churches against the departures from Orthodoxy which have become ever more noticeable in recent years; it has spread information about the saints glorified by the Russian Church Outside of Russia in these years: St. John of Kronstadt (1964), St. Herman of Alaska (1970), St. Xenia of Petersburg (1978), and the New Martyrs of Russia (1981), seeing in these glorifications one of the most obvious signs of the vitality of Orthodoxy even in these spiritually dormant times; it has followed with love and sympathy the persecutions and Orthodox awakening in much-suffering Russia, which have become especially noticeable precisely in these years and have been one of the chief sources of inspiration for genuine spiritual life among the Orthodox of the free world who are able to respond with their hearts to these events.

The witness of the Russian Church Outside of Russia in these years has been largely a lonely one. There has been some response to it from Orthodox Christians of other jurisdictions, but almost entirely on an "unofficial" level. The progress of modernism and outright apostasy in these jurisdictions has been lamentable, and it seems irreversible; a silent minority of priests and faithful in some of these jurisdictions, especially in America, does indeed look sympathetically to the Russian Church Outside of Russia as a center of the battle to preserve true Orthodoxy today, although there is little agreement among them on specific ways in which to express this sympathy. The Church Outside of Russia, and *The Orthodox Word*, will undoubtedly have more influence on such strugglers in future, as the path of apostasy comes closer to its goal of another false union with Rome and the other Western confessions. Up to now, however, this influence has been mostly limited to inspiring an increased respect among those of other jurisdictions for traditional Orthodox piety and dogmatic teaching.

THE HUNDREDTH ISSUE

The history of *The Orthodox Word* has been inextricably bound up with the convert movement in the Church Outside of Russia (as opposed to the isolated individuals who may have joined themselves to her before 1965 or so). *The Orthodox Word* has tried to give these converts inspiration and encouragement in their struggle to preserve the Faith, as well as a truly Orthodox orientation to Christian teaching and spiritual life.

However, the growth of this convert movement in the Church has led to a serious problem, which is especially to be oberved in America, which, as Solzhenitsyn has well noted, places undue emphasis on outward legalistic norms in daily life. A great weakness of us converts (by which we mean not only those newly converted to the faith, but also those coming from other jurisdictions to the more "old-fashioned" Russian Church Abroad, as well as those who are "born Orthodox" but only come back to the faith after a period of rebellion or indifference) is our tendency to criticize, to overemphasize the mind and underemphasize the heart. This tendency, which often becomes a habit which is very difficult to uproot, leads to disagreements and suspicions among Orthodox Christians who should be of one mind in their battle for traditional Orthodoxy. And so it is that, especially in the past several years, a number of converts to the Russian Church Outside of Russia have followed the path of criticism so far that they have found the bishops of this Church also to be "not Orthodox enough," and they have left the Church to pursue their elusive goal of "super-correctness" in some other jurisdiction, or in a new grouping of their own creation. This path is a danger today to others also who still remain in the Church.

In a sense, the battle which must be waged against this spirit of criticism is a sign of "growing pains" among Orthodox converts. In 1965 there was not enough awareness of Orthodoxy to produce such a temptation of "super-correctness"; but now that this temptation has become a reality, those who wish to preserve the spirit as well as the letter of Orthodoxy will have to go deeper into the experience of the faith. *The Orthodox Word*, which has helped to produce the increased awareness of Orthodoxy today, will continue to present the basic sources of Orthodoxy that can lead this awareness in the true path of Christian Faith that is heartfelt, sober, and fruitful. With regard to outward questions of jurisdictions, canons, definitions—it is, of course, our bishops who as always must be our guides.

The times ahead, more perhaps than ever before in the Church's history, are a time of what St. Gregory the Theologian well called "suffering

Orthodoxy." We truly live in apocalyptic times: atheism is conquering the public sphere of the whole world, false religion increases as never before and captures many of those who awaken from the sleep of unbelief, the ecumenical movement draws nearer its goal of a false world church (the harlot of the Apocalypse), and the spirit of the coming Antichrist begins to place it seal everywhere. Those who would be faithful to Christ in these terrible times must be prepared for sufferings and trials which will truly test the faithfulness of our hearts to Him.

And yet, greater than these sufferings and the prince of this world who will inflict them upon us is He Who has promised to be with us even to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). The witness of the New Martyrs of Russia, of those persecuted there even now, and of the righteous men of these latter times—is enough to reveal to us the reality of the profound and only true Christianity which alone can penetrate the hearts of men who thirst for truth even in these evil times. It is to this reality of true Orthodox Christianity that *The Orthodox Word* will continue to be dedicated, with the help of God and His Saints. Amen.

A Forthcoming Major Work

LIVES OF THE NEW MARTYRS

by Ivan Andreyev

Lives of 40 of the New Martyrs of 20th-century Russia, together with numerous documents detailing the formation, history, and present state of the underground Orthodox Church there and its influence on the awakening of Russian Orthodoxy today.

More than 600 pages; many illustrations; $18.00

Order now from the

ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA PRESS

PLATINA, CALIFORNIA 96076

ICON OF THE NEW MARTYRS by Archimandrite Cyprian of Jordanville

ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA

Commemorated Dec. 12 and July 27 (†1836)

The Saint Herman Pilgrimages

From this day, from this hour,
from this minute, let us strive
to love God above all, and
fulfill His holy will.
St. Herman

Since the glorification of St. Herman of Alaska in 1970, a number of pious people within the Russian Church Outside of Russia have hoped that this patron saint of the American land might become a source of inspiration and a kind of rallying point for renewed spiritual life, especially among Orthodox young people in America, rather in the spirit of the St. Vladimir's circles for Russian youth in the 1950's. Although the service of glorification itself, celebrated by hierarchs of the Russian Church Outside of Russia in San Francisco, was a time of great spiritual uplift and fervor and produced in many a new resolve for labors pleasing to God—still, little was done in the first years after this to keep alive this initial fervor. There were sporadic attempts in some parishes to make St. Herman's feast (December 12/25) something special, and there was a major pilgrimage on this day in 1973 at Holy Trinity Monastery at Jordanville, New York. But it was not until the late 1970's that more regular activities began in the name of St. Herman.

In the summer of 1977 the first Saint Herman Summer Pilgrimage was held at the St. Herman of Alaska Monastery, Platina, California. The aim of the pilgrimage was to provide an opportunity for basic Orthodox education and inspiration in the context of a pilgrimage to an Orthodox monastery; away from the distracting and worldly influences of modern city life,

the pilgrims were able to go deeper into their own Orthodox faith and became more aware of the riches it contains for their own and others' salvation. Two days of lectures after the Divine Liturgy on the feast of St. Herman's glorification (July 27/August 9) and the next day were followed by a week of courses in basic Orthodox knowledge. The aim was not a "conference" of academic lectures (which, of course, can also have its place in Orthodox life), but a learning experience on a simpler level, stemming not only from the formal talks, but also from the daily cycle of church services and the labors in which many pilgrims shared. The pilgrimage was entirely free of charge so as to be accessible to everyone, and the pilgrims the first year came mainly from northern California and Oregon. There were a number of free discussions on Orthodox questions of the day, the chief question being always: How to put Orthodoxy into life today.

The Saint Herman Summer Pilgrimages in succeeding years have followed the format of the first pilgrimage, attracting an ever-increasing number of pilgrims, many from the East Coast of the United States (and, in the last pilgrimage, some even from Australia and Japan). Russians and American converts alike come, as well as young people of other Orthodox jurisdictions who are beginning to thirst for the genuine Orthodoxy that is so hard to find in "official" Orthodox life today. Beginning with the second pilgrimage in 1978, a regular part of the week's activity has been the baptism of adult converts (as many as seven at the 1980 pilgrimage), for whom the summer courses serve as the culminating point of their preparation for receiving Holy Orthodoxy. Pilgrims also include new inquirers into the faith, some of whom become catechumens.

The 1980 pilgrimage was attended by both bishops of the diocese: Archbishop Anthony of San Francisco, ruling bishop of Western America, and Bishop Nektary of Seattle. During his own talk to the pilgrims, Archbishop Anthony identified the pilgrimage as being in the spirit of the missionary labors of the late Archbishop Vitaly at Pochaev Monastery in Western Russia before the First World War. There this fervent missionary would give inspired talks outdoors to the great

crowds who came to the monastery to venerate the relics of St. Job and the wonderworking Pochaev Icon of the most Holy Theotokos, arousing them to fervent piety and firm defense of the Orthodox Faith. These talks would alternate with church services, the singing of akathists, and the showing of slides of Orthodox places against the wall of the church late at night. The fervor inspired by these Pochaev pilgrimages changed lives and gave new life to the Orthodox Christians of Western Russia. The Saint Herman Summer Pilgrimage, on a much humbler scale, does indeed try to follow the example of Archbishop Vitaly

Every year at the summer pilgrimage there are slides or films illustrating some aspect of Orthodox piety or concern; in 1979 it was films of the suffering Christians in Russia, in 1980 a film of the Holy Land by a pilgrim who had been there, in 1981 slides of old Valaam Monastery and of a recent pilgrimage to Mount Athos. The highlight of the talks at the 1980 pilgrimage was that of Father Roman Lukianov, priest of the Epiphany parish in Boston, on the New Martyrs of Russia, culminating in a lively discussion and the signing of a petition to the Synod of Bishops calling for their speedy glorification (which indeed occurred in 1981).

The 1981 pilgrimage overlapped the Russian Youth Conference in San Francisco, and Bishop Alypy of Cleveland replaced the local bishops at the opening of the pilgrimage, taking also an active part in the discussions following the lectures. Later in the week Archbishop Laurus of Jordanville also visited the pilgrimage. Apart from the formal lectures, there were also informal talks, for example at the communal meals after the reading of the Lives of Saints. All of the talks had as their aim the deepening of Orthodox awareness and piety and the putting into life of the Orthodox spirit of otherworldliness, and the pilgrims showed a great thirst for all they were given. The week of courses every year is devoted to a general view of Orthodox history and literature, church singing, and the like; in the past three years there have also been solid courses in the Patristic interpretation of books of Scripture (Daniel, the Apocalypse, the first three chapters of Genesis). Oral examinations are given to all pilgrims who

wish to "graduate" from the courses, and it is noticeable how much the general level of awareness of Orthodoxy increases by the end of the week. The daily cycle of church services, celebrated mostly in English, helps to set a pious and sober tone to the whole week.

The 1982 pilgrimage will be held August 7-9, with the week's courses following until August 15.

In 1979 the St. Herman Winter Pilgrimage was revived at Holy Trinity Monastery at Jordanville, and in the two years since then has attracted increasing interest among the young Orthodox people of the East Coast. In addition to the main lecture by a visiting priest-speaker, the pilgrimage includes panel discussions by young seminarians, lively discussion periods, slides or movies—and of course the splendid monastery church services.

In 1981 the first St. Herman Winter Pilgrimage was held in Redding, California (the nearest parish to the St. Herman Monastery, which is often snow-bound at this time of year) on the beloved feast of St. Herman, the Meeting of the Lord, to which his chapel on Spruce Island was dedicated (Feb. 2/15). In 1981 the two-day pilgrimage drew Orthodox people from California and Oregon for two days of talks, discussions, and church services which centered around the Orthodox awareness of and preparation for Great Lent. The 1982 pilgrimage has a similar practical theme.

Recent years have seen the beginning of a revival of Orthodox life in America—perhaps as a preparation for disasters and sufferings that lie ahead of us. Only a living and conscious Orthodox spiritual life can face such trials. The time is more than ripe for every Orthodox Christian to begin making his own that true and only Christianity which is his by virtue of baptism. All are invited to participate in the St. Herman Pilgrimages and to begin now to renew the life of Christ within us.

Holding the staff of Archbishop John, Archbishop Anthony delivers a sermon at the summer pilgrimage (l. Hieromonk Seraphim, r. Abbot Herman)

The St. Herman Monastery church tucked away in the forested mountains of northern California.

ST. SERAPHIM OF SAROV (†1833)
Seer of Russia's Future

The Future of Russia and the End of the World

A Lecture given at the Youth Conference of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, San Francisco, August 3, 1981

by Hieromonk Seraphim

EVERY ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN is placed between two worlds: this fallen world where we try to work out our salvation, and the other world, heaven, the homeland towards which we are striving and which, if we are leading a true Christian life, gives us the inspiration to live from day to day in Christian virtue and love.

But the world is too much with us. We often, and in fact nowadays we *usually* forget the heavenly world. The pressure of worldliness is so strong today that we often lose track of what our life as Christians is all about. Even if we may be attending church services frequently and consider ourselves "active" church members, how often our churchliness is only something external, bound up with beautiful services and the whole richness of our Orthodox tradition of worship, but lacking in real inner conviction that Orthodoxy is the faith that can save our soul for eternity, lacking in real love for and commitment to Christ, the incarnate God and Founder of our faith. How often our church life is just a matter of habit, something we go through outwardly but which does not change us inwardly, does not make us grow spiritually and lead us to eternal life in God.

OUR TIMES

We live in the times which our Lord warned us about in the Gospel, when "the love of many shall grow cold" (Matt. 24:12), in the latter times when the Christian Gospel which was received with such fervor by the first Christians has become only one small part of the worldly life that most of us lead, instead of the center and meaning of our life—which is what it should be if we realized what our faith really is. Orthodox Christianity, as a burning faith which we are not ashamed to confess and to have as the most precious thing in our life, is to a great extent in a state of decline and retreat in the world today.

But ironically—and providentially—as Orthodoxy has seemed to retreat, Russia (or rather, the Soviet Union, the atheist regime that has enslaved the Russian land) has advanced and now has a leading, perhaps *the* leading position in the world history of our times. Therefore, what is happening in the Soviet Union today is looked to with great interest by the rest of the world. And significantly, a good part of what is happening in the Soviet Union today concerns the life of the real Russia—Orthodox Russia. The Orthodox revival in Russia today is closely bound up with the future of the Russian land.

In the 19th and early 20th century Russia before the Revolution of 1917 there were prophecies of spiritual men not only concerning the coming of atheism to Russia and the epoch of blood and slavery which it introduced into the world, but also concerning what would happen to Russia after this epoch, if the Orthodox Russian people would repent of the sins which produced it.

Let us, therefore, look at these prophecies and the way they are bound up with what is happening in Russia today. Let us look, not from the superficial point of view of the popular newsmagazines, but deeper, and try to see something of what is happening to the soul, to the heart of Russia, and what may be expected there according to these prophecies and according to our knowledge of the more general prophecies concerning what is to happen before the end of the world.

THE END OF THE WORLD

But why should we speak of the end of the world? Are we really living in the last times of this world? Why do we bind together the future of Russia and the end of the world?

THE FUTURE OF RUSSIA

Even secular writers speak of our "apocalyptic" times. And truly, the problems that plague the world today—the exhaustion of resources and food, overpopulation, the literal monsters created by modern technology, and especially the weapons capable of destroying entire countries or even the whole civilized earth—all point to the approach of a crisis in human history quite beyond anything the world has ever seen, and perhaps to the literal end of life upon earth.

At the same time, religious thinkers point to the blossoming of non-Christian religious movements in our times and predict a "new age" in which a "new religious consciousness" will dominate men's minds and put an end to the 2000-year reign of Christianity. Astrologers refer to the "Aquarian Age" which they think is to begin around the year 2000. And the very approach of the year 2000 is enough to inspire in many minds the idea of a new epoch, somehow different from all the rest of human history.

Among many non-Orthodox Christians these ideas take the form of a teaching called "chiliasm" or "millenarianism"—the belief that Christ is soon to come to earth and reign right here with His saints for a thousand years before the end of the world. This teaching is a heresy that was condemned by the early Church Fathers; it has its origin in a misinterpretation of the book of Revelations (the Apocalypse). The Orthodox Church teaches that the reign of Christ with His saints, when the devil is "bound" for a thousand years (Apoc. 20:3)—is the period we are now living in, the whole period (1000 being a number symbolizing wholeness) between the first and second comings of Christ. In this period the saints do reign with Christ in His Church, but it is a mystical reign which is not to be defined in the outward, political sense that chiliasts give to it. The devil is truly bound in this period—that is, restricted in the exercise of his ill will against humanity—and believers who live the life of the Church and receive the Holy Mysteries of Christ live a blessed life, preparing them for the eternal heavenly Kingdom. The non-Orthodox, who do not have Holy Mysteries and have not tasted of the true life of the Church, cannot understand this mystical reign of Christ and so look for a political and outward reign.

And so it is that the future of the world, in which Russia obviously will have a central place, is bound up with ideas either of the end of the world in a physical sense, or the end of the civilized world as we know it and the coming of a new epoch of almost paradise-like qualities.

Some people have interpreted Russia's place in this new era in terms of the heresy of chiliasm. In fact, if we look closely at the teaching of communism, which has taken possession of Russian society in these past 60-some years, we can see that it is a secular version of the chiliast idea; it teaches that a totally new historical era begins with Communism, that when Communism finally dominates the world there will be universal happiness and the liberation of mankind from everything that has bound it in the past, including religion.

Today, after sixty years of the Communist experiment in Russia, and a shorter period in other nations, we can see how foolish are the beliefs underlying Communism. The reality of Communism is not paradise on earth, but Gulag; mankind has not been "liberated" at all, but enslaved worse than ever before. But Russia, the first country to experience the Communist yoke, is also the first country to begin to wake up from it and survive it; despite the continued reign of Communist tyranny in Russia, atheism has not captured the soul of Russia, and the religious awakening that can be seen now in Russia is undoubtedly only the beginning of something immense and elemental: the recovery of the soul of a whole nation from the plague of atheism. This is the reason why Russia today can speak a word of significance to the whole world, which is plunging into the same trap of atheism from which Russia is emerging; and this is why the future of Russia is so closely bound up with the future of the whole world, in a religious sense.

THE END OF THE WORLD IN CHRISTIAN PROPHECY

Before turning specifically to the prophecies about Russia, I would like to summarize the general Orthodox teaching on what is to happen just before the end of the world. This will give us a context in which to place the prophecies regarding the future of Russia.

The events before the end of the world are described in a number of places in Holy Scripture: the 24th chapter of Matthew and parallel places in the other Gospels; most of the book of the Apocalypse, especially chapter 8 and onwards; the second chapter of II Thessalonians; II Peter, chapter 3; several chapters of the book of Daniel; and other passages.

The Apocalypse describes these events in a series of visions: some bright and positive, relating to the fulfillment of God's justice and the salvation of His chosen ones; and some dark and negative, relating to the

terrible plagues that will come on earth for the sins of mankind. Sometimes we today overemphasize the dark and negative side, seeing the increase of evil around us; but that comes from our faintheartedness and worldliness—we must look at the whole picture.

As the time of the end of this world comes near, it is true that there will be a time of tribulation such as the world has never seen (Matt. 24:21): there will be famines, plagues, earthquakes, wars and rumors of wars, persecutions, false prophets and false Christs, and the love of many (including Christians) will grow cold. But at the same time the Gospel will be preached to all nations, and those who endure to the end with the aid of Christ will be saved.

The evil and false religion in the world will culminate in the reign of Antichrist, a world ruler who will seem to bring peace out of the world disorder and will seem to be Christ come again to earth, reigning from the restored Temple in Jerusalem.

But there will be those who see through the deception. In particular, two Old Testament prophets who did not die will return to earth—Elijah to convert the Jews, and Enoch to preach to the other nations. The short reign of Antichrist—only three and a half years—will end in new disorders and wars, in the midst of which Christ Himself will come from heaven, preceded by the sign of the Cross, and this world will be consumed by fire and totally renewed, at the same time that the bodies of the dead will arise from the tomb and be rejoined to their souls in order to stand before God's final judgment.

Now, with this general background of the events of the last times, let us look at the prophecies regarding Russia.

THE FUTURE OF RUSSIA

In 19th-century Russia a number of prophets—and even some far-seeing laymen like Dostoevsky—foresaw the Revolution which would come upon Russia as a result of unbelief, worldliness, and a purely formal attitude towards Orthodoxy, devoid of the burning and self-sacrificing faith that Orthodoxy demands. Some saw this in general terms as a terrible disaster ready to overtake the Russian land, as did Bishop Theophan the Recluse when he looked at the lack of true Christian faith in so many people and exclaimed: In a hundred years, what will be left of our Orthodoxy?

Others saw more specifically the frightful Revolution which would spread to the entire world. Thus, St. John of Kronstadt said, in a sermon

delivered in 1905: "Russia, if you fall away from your faith, as many of the intellectual class have already fallen away, you will no longer be Russia or Holy Russia. And if there will be no repentance in the Russian people—then the end of the world is near. God will take away the pious Tsar and will send a whip in the person of impious, cruel, self-appointed rulers, who will inundate the whole earth with blood and tears" (*Father John of Kronstadt*, 50th Anniversary Book, Utica, N.Y., 1958, p. 164).

This is the state in which the world now finds itself, with nearly half of it drenched in blood and enduring tyranny which began in 1917 with the Russian Revolution. Is there any hope for deliverance, or will atheism simply conquer the whole world and set up the Kingdom of Antichrist? We have good reason to doubt that future events will be as simple as this, both because the very country that began the reign of atheism, Russia, is now undergoing a religious awakening which is already a hindrance to the spread of atheism, and also because Antichrist, according to Orthodox prophecy, will not be simply an atheist tyrant like Stalin, but a *religious* figure who will *persuade* rather than compel people to accept him.

The holy men alive in Russia at the beginning of the Revolution were aware of the apocalyptic nature of this event and knew that it would be a long and difficult trial for the Russian land. But they also foresaw that there would be an end to this trial.

The Elder Alexius of the Zosima Hermitage, who was the monk who drew the lot that elected Patriarch Tikhon, heard people crying out in church in the Chudov monastery (this was in the early, confused months of the Revolution): "Our Russia is lost, Holy Russia is lost!" To this he answered: "Who is it that is saying that Russia is lost, that she has perished? No, no, she is not lost, she has not perished and will not perish—but the Russian people must be purified of sin through great trials. One must pray and fervently repent. But Russia is not lost and she has not perished" (*Orthodox Russia*, 1970, no. 1, p. 9).

Starets Anatole the Younger of Optina, in the very first days of the Revolution, in February, 1917, made a prophecy in the form of a vivid picture of the future of Russia: "There will be a storm. And the Russian ship will be smashed to pieces. But people can be saved even on splinters and fragments. And not everyone will perish. One must pray, everyone must repent and pray fervently. And what happens after a storm?... There will be a calm.' At this everyone said: 'But there is no more ship, it is shattered to pieces; it has perished, everything has perished.' 'It is not so,' said

Batiushka. 'A great miracle of God will be manifested. And all the splinters and fragments, by the will of God and His power, will come together and be united, and the ship will be rebuilt in its beauty and will go on its own way as foreordained by God. And this will be a miracle evident to everyone'" (*Orthodox Russia*, 1970, no. 1, p. 9).

Elder Barnabas of the Gethsemane Skete spoke before the Revolution of the disaster coming upon Russia and the cruel persecutions against the Orthodox Faith. He said: "Persecutions against the faith will constantly increase. There will be an unheard-of grief and darkness, and almost all the churches will be closed. But when it will seem to people that it is impossible to endure any longer, then deliverance will come. There will be a flowering. Churches will even begin to be built. But this will be a flowering before the end" (private letter from N. Kieter).

Schema-hieromonk Aristocleus, not long before his death in August, 1918, said that "now we are undergoing the times before Antichrist, but Russia will yet be delivered. There will be much suffering, much torture. The whole of Russia will become a prison, and one must greatly entreat the Lord for forgiveness. One must repent of one's sins and fear to do even the least sin, but strive to do good, even the smallest. For even the wing of a fly has weight, and God's scales are exact. And when even the smallest of good in the cup overweighs, then will God reveal His mercy upon Russia. Ten days before the end (of his life) he said that the end will come through China. There will be an extraordinary outburst and a miracle of God would be manifested. And there will be an entirely different life, but all this will not be for long" (*Orthodox Russia*, 1969, no. 21, p. 3).

Elder Nectarius of Optina in the 1920's prophesied: "Russia will arise, and materially it will not be wealthy. But in spirit it will be wealthy, and in Optina there will yet be seven luminaries, seven pillars" (I. M. Kontzevich, *Optina Monastery and its Epoch*, Jordanville, 1973, p. 538).

Interestingly, St. John of Kronstadt also prophesied that the deliverance of Russia would come from the East (I. K. Sursky, *Father John of Kronstadt*, Belgrade, 1942, vl. 2, p. 24.).

Archbishop Theophan of Poltava summed up in the 1930's the prophecies which he had received from such elders as these: "You ask me about the near future and about the last times. I do not speak on my own,, but give the revelation of the Elders: The coming of Antichrist draws nigh and is very near. The time separating us from him should be counted a matter of years and at most a matter of some decades. But before the

coming of Antichrist Russia must yet be restored—to be sure, for a short time. And in Russia there must be a Tsar forechosen by the Lord Himself. He will be a man of burning faith, great mind and iron will. This much has been revealed about him. We shall await the fulfillment of what has been revealed. Judging by many signs it is drawing nigh, unless because of our sins the Lord God shall revoke, shall alter what has been promised. According to the witness of the word of God, this also happens" (*The Orthodox Word*, 1969, no. 5, p. 194).

Thus we may see in the prophecies of these God-inspired men in the early part of this century a definite expectation of the restoration of Holy Russia, and even of an Orthodox Tsar, for a short time not long before the coming of Antichrist and the end of the world. This will be something miraculous and not an ordinary historical event. But at the same time it is something that depends upon the Russian people themselves, because God always acts through the free will of man. Just as Ninevah was spared when the people repented, and Jonah's prohecies about its destruction proved false, so also the prophecies of the restoration of Russia will prove false if there is no repentance in the Russian people.

Archbishop John Maximovitch of blessed memory, whose tomb is in the very cathedral where services were held this morning, reflected deeply on the meaning of the Russian Revolution and the exile of so many Russian people. In his report to the All-Diaspora Sobor in Yugoslavia in 1938 he wrote:

"The Russian people as a whole has performed great sins which are the cause of the present misfortunes: the specific sins are oath-breaking and regicide. The public and military leaders renounced their obedience and loyalty to the Tsar even before his abdication, forcing this latter from the Tsar, who did not desire bloodshed within the country; and the people openly and noisily greeted this deed, and nowhere did it loudly express its lack of agreement with it. . . .Those guilty of the sin of regicide are not only those who physically performed it, but the whole people which rejoiced on the occasion of the overthrow of the Tsar and allowed his abasement, arrest, and exile, leaving him defenceless in the hands of the criminals, which fact in itself already predetermined the end. Thus, the catastrophe which has come upon Russia is the direct consequence of terrible sins, and the rebirth of Russia is possible only after cleansing from them. However, up to this time there has been no genuine repentance, the crimes that have

been performed have clearly not been condemned, and many active participants in the Revolution continue even now to affirm that at that time it was not possible to act in any other way. In not expressing a direct condemnation of the February Revolution, the uprising against the Anointed of God, the Russian people continue to participate in the sin, especially when they defend the fruits of the Revolution" (*The Orthodox Word*, 1973, no. 50, p. 91).

Of course, regicide—the killing of the anointed Tsar—is not the only sin that lies upon the conscience of the Orthodox Russian people. This crime is, as it were, a symbol of the whole falling away of Russia from Christ and true Orthodoxy—a process that took up most of the 19th and 20th centuries, and only now is perhaps beginning to be reversed. It is most interesting that in Russia itself today the question of the glorification of the Tsar together with the other New Martyrs is bound up with the lifting of the literal curse which has lain on the Russian land since his martyrdom. Father Gleb Yakunin—who is now suffering a cruel imprisonment precisely for making statements like this—has written a letter to the Orthodox Russians of the Diaspora, signed also by several of his fellow strugglers, that expresses the same ideas about the Tsar that Vladika John has expressed. At the end of this letter he writes:

"The meaning for world history of the martyr's death of the Imperial Family, something that likens it to the most significant Biblical events, consists of the fact that here the Constantinopolitan period of the existence of the Church of Christ comes to an end, and a new, martyric, apocalyptic age opens up. It is begun with the voluntary sacrifice of the last anointed Orthodox Emperor and his family. The tragedy of the Royal Family has lain like a curse on the Russian land, having become the symbolic prologue of Russia's long path of the Cross—the death of tens of millions of her sons and daughters. The canonization of the Imperial Martyrs will be for Russia the lifting from her of the sin of regicide; this will finally deliver her from the evil charms" (*La Pensee Russe*, Dec. 6, 1979, no. 3285, p. 5).

It is too simple, of course, to say that the glorification of the New Martyrs, including the Royal Family, will bring about the restoration of Holy Russia. But if the Orthodox people, both in Russia and in the Diaspora, would receive this act with all their hearts, and use it as an opportunity to repent deeply of their sins, there is no calculating the impact it might have on Russia.

One great prophecy of the future of Russia was known to only a few before the Revolution; it was so daring that the church censor would not allow it to be printed. It was found in the same collection of the manuscripts of Motovilov that gave to the world the famous "Conversation" of St. Seraphim on the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. This prophecy, which has now appeared in several printings in the last decade, concerns the literal resurrection of St. Seraphim before the end of the world. Here is what St. Seraphim told to Motovilov:

"Many times I heard from the mouth of the great God-pleaser, the Elder, Father Seraphim, that he would not lie in Sarov with his flesh. And behold, once I (Motovilov) dared to ask him: 'Batiushka, you deign to say all the time that with your flesh you will not lie in Sarov. Does this mean that the monks of Sarov will give you away?'

" 'Your godliness, the Lord God has ordained that I, humble Seraphim, should live considerably longer than a hundred years. But since toward that time the bishops will become so impious that in their impiety they will surpass the Greek bishops of the time of Theodosius the Younger, so that they will no longer even believe in the chief dogma of the Christian faith: therefore it has been pleasing to the Lord God to take me, humble Seraphim, from this temporal life until the time, and then resurrect me, and my resurrection will be as the resurrection of the Seven Youths in the cave of Ochlon in the days of Theodosius the Younger.'

"Having revealed to me this great and fearful mystery, the great Elder informed me that after his resurrection he would go from Sarov to Diveyevo and there he would begin the preaching of world-wide repentance. For this preaching, and above all because of the miracle of resurrection, a great multitude of people will assemble from all the ends of the earth; Diveyevo will become a lavra, Vertyanova will become a city, and Arzamas a province. And preaching repentance in Diveyevo, Batiushka Seraphim will uncover four relics in it, and after uncovering them he himself will lie down in their midst. And then soon will come the end of everything.

"Another time St. Seraphim spoke to Motovilov concerning the spiritual state of the last Christians who will remain faithful to God before the end of the world:

" 'And in the days of that great sorrow, of which it is said that no flesh would be saved unless, for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short—

in those days the remnant of the faithful are to experience in themselves something like that which was experienced once by the Lord Himself when He, hanging on the Cross, being perfect God and perfect Man, felt Himself so forsaken by His Divinity that He cried out to Him: *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?* The last Christians also will experience in themselves a similar abandonment of humanity by the grace of God, but only for a very short time, after the passing of which the Lord will not delay immediately to appear in all His glory, and all the holy Angels with Him. And then will be performed in all its fullness everything foreordained from the ages in the pre-eternal counsel (of the Holy Trinity)' " (*The Orthodox Word*, 1973, no. 50, p. 123-4).

This prophecy was never printed in Russia, and yet it is known there today. In a letter from a priest, published in the first issue of the periodical *Nadezhda*, describing his visit to Sarov and Diveyevo and his discovery there that Holy Russia was still alive, and that nuns from Diveyevo convent (which was closed in 1926) still live there, there is this prophecy from an old woman, Evdokia, who had just received Holy Communion. Addressing the priest, she said: "Soon, soon, here in Diveyevo, there will be a celebration. Now it is not years, not months, but days and hours that remain until the opening of the monastery and the manifestation of four relics: those of the Saint, the Foundress (of Diveyevo) Alexandra, Matushka Martha, and Blessed Evdokeyushka, who was tortured and killed by the atheists. . . . The Saint commands me: Say to him and no one else. . . that soon, soon, both the monastery and the relics will be opened. . . He commands me to tell you that without fail you must come here for the opening of the church and the relics" (*Nadezhda*, 1977, no. 1, p. 148).

Of the fact that Holy Russia is still alive, despite the continued reign of atheism in Russia, we have the testimony now of many observers in Russia itself. Here is what Gennady Shimanov says:

"Holy Russia cannot be buried, it cannot pass away; it is eternal and victorious, and it is precisely to it that the final word in the history of our people will belong. . . Holy Russia went away only from the surface of contemporary life, but it continues to live in its hidden depths, germinating until the time, so that in the time pleasing to God, having survived the winter, it will again break through to the surface and adorn the face of the Russian land, which has been so cruelly lashed by fiery and icy storms" (*The Orthodox Word*, 1973, no. 50, p. 98).

RUSSIA'S MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

In the book which most thoroughly describes the events to occur at the end of the world, the *Apocalypse* of St. John the Theologian, at the opening of the seventh seal, which precedes the final plague to come upon mankind, it is said that *there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour* (Apoc. 8:1). Some have interpreted this to mean a short period of peace before the final events of world history—namely, the short period of the restoration of Russia, when the preaching of world-wide repentance will begin with Russia—that "new, ultimate word" which even Dostoevsky hoped Russia would give to the world (Pushkin Speech, *The Diary of a Writer*, tr. Boris Brasol, New York, George Braziller, 1954, p. 980). Under present world conditions, when the events of one country are known to the whole world almost instantly, and when Russia, cleansed by the blood of its martyrs, indeed has a better chance than any other country to awake from the sleep of atheism and unbelief—we can already conceive the possibility of such an event. As Father Dimitry Dudko and others have said, it cannot be that the blood of Russia's innumerable martyrs will be in vain; undoubtedly it is the seed of the last great flowering of true Christianity.

But it is easy to become lost in dreams of the future of the world. We should be aware of what is to happen at the end of the world, and of what may happen in Russia. But spiritual events such as the resurrection of Russia depend upon each individual soul. This event will not happen without the participation of the Orthodox people—our repentance and struggle. And this involves not only the people of Russia itself—it involves also the whole of the Russian Diaspora, and all the Orthodox people of the world.

Archbishop John, in the same report to the All-Diaspora Sobor of 1938 which I have already quoted, speaks of the apocalyptic mission of the Russian people outside of Russia:

"In chastising, the Lord at the same time also shows the Russian people the way to salvation by making it a preacher of Orthodoxy in the whole world. The Russian Diaspora has made all the ends of the world familiar with Orthodoxy; the mass of Russian exiles, for the most part, is unconsciously a preacher of Orthodoxy. . . . To the Russians abroad it has been granted to shine in the whole world with the light of Orthodoxy, so that other peoples, seeing their good deeds, might glorify our Father Who is in heaven, and thus obtain salvation for themselves. . . The Diaspora will have to be converted to the path of repentance and, having acquired

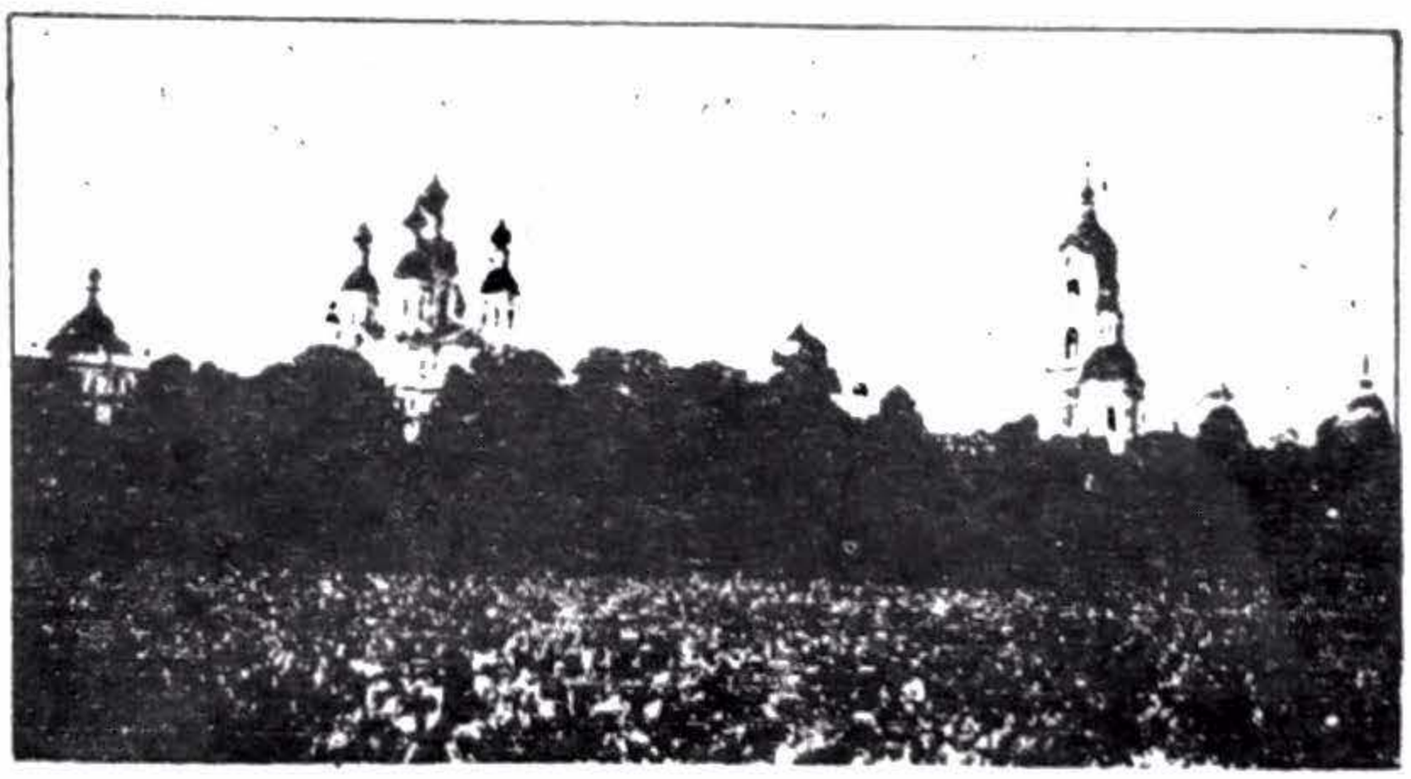
forgiveness for itself through prayer to God and through being reborn spiritually (will) become capable also of giving rebirth to our suffering homeland" (*The Orthodox Word*, 1973, no. 50, pp. 92, 94).

Thus, the Russians abroad, by their living the true life of Orthodoxy, should be already preparing the way for St. Seraphim's preaching of world-wide repentance. To some extent this is happening, and one can even begin to see, parallel to the Orthodox revival in Russia, a genuine Orthodox awakening in America and other lands outside of Russia.

But it all depends on each one of us: if we are awakening to true Orthodox life, then Holy Russia will be restored; if we are not, then God can withdraw His promises.

Archbishop John ended his report to the 1938 Sobor with a prophecy and a hope that there will be a true Pascha in Russia that will shine forth to the whole world before the very end of all things and the beginning of the universal Kingdom of God:

"Shake away the sleep of despondency and sloth, O sons of Russia! Behold the glory of her sufferings and be purified; wash yourselves from your sins! Be strengthened in the Orthodox faith, so as to be worthy to dwell in the dwelling of the Lord and to settle in His holy mountain! Leap up, leap up, arise, O Russia, you who from the Lord's hands have drunk the cup of His wrath! When your sufferings shall have ended, your righteousness shall go with you and the glory of the Lord shall accompany you. The peoples shall come to your light, and kings to the shining which shall rise upon you. Then *Lift up your eyes and see: behold, your children come to you from the West and the North and the Sea and the East, blessing in you Christ forever.* Amen." (*Ibid.*, p. 94)



Saroy Monastery

ARCHBISHOP AVERKY
OF JORDANVILLE
1906 - 1976

Archbishop Averky

1976 - 1981

HIS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE ECUMENICAL ORTHODOX CHURCH

"Alas! His golden lips
have been silenced!"

Too often have we Orthodox Christians grown used to "taking for granted" the great men in our midst, of not valuing them as we ought until they have departed from us—and even then not evaluating them properly, and letting their significance and their teaching slip away from us into oblivion.

Archbishop Averky was one of the last of the giants of 20th-century Orthodoxy, not merely of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, or even of Russian Orthodoxy—but of the whole of the 20th-century Orthodox Church.

Born Alexander Pavlovich Taushev on October 19 (Nov. 1), 1906, in Kazan, Archbishop Averky was of a noble family. His father was a government official whose duties took him to many parts of Russia, allowing young Alexander to have a first-hand acquaintance with the heart of Holy Russia, its monasteries and holy places; the memory of these places remained with him all his life, even though he left his homeland while still a young teenager. Even at that tender age he was attracted to books of a spiritual nature, such as *Unseen Warfare*, and already from the age of seven or eight he began to feel an alienation from the ordinary life of the world and a subconscious attraction towards the monastic life.

In the midst of the civil war that followed on the Revolution of 1917, the Taushev family left Russia, in 1920, with great grief of soul. The family settled in the Bulgarian city of Varna, where Alexander attended school until 1926. The chief religious influence on him at this time was the local parish church and its priest, Father John Slunin.

Then, in 1925, a bishop came to Varna who was to give Alexander's life its direction: Archbishop Theophan of Poltava, a strict monk, a man of prayer, and theologian in the true Patristic tradition. After meeting him, the young student resolved to undertake the monastic way of life. With Archbishop Theophan's blessing, he attended the Theological Faculty of the University of Sophia, and on graduating from it with brilliant success in 1930 he went to Carpatho-Russia (in Czechoslovakia) with the intention of becoming a monk and serving the Russian Church. Tonsured a monk there in 1931, and ordained priestmonk the next year, he served several parishes and assisted the abbot of the monastery of St. Nicholas near the village of Iza. Soon he also undertook responsibilities as editor of the diocesan periodical and teacher of catechism in secondary schools.

When Carpatho-Russia was occupied by the Magyars in 1940, Father Averky went to Belgrade and served under Metropolitan Anastassy, Chief Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad, conducting courses in religious subjects both for seminarians and laymen.

When the Synod of Bishops moved to Munich in 1945, he followed it and continued his work of the religious education of youth. In 1950 he was appointed by the Synod as chairman of its Missionary Education Committee. When he came to America in 1951 he was invited to the newly-organized Holy Trinity Seminary at Jordanville, New York, to teach New Testament, Liturgics, and Homiletics. In 1952 he became Rector of the Seminary, in 1953 Bishop of Syracuse, and in 1960, at the death of Archbishop Vitaly, Abbot of Holy Trinity Monastery. In these positions he continued until his death his life's work of enlightening the Orthodox faithful, both the future pastors of the seminary (about 100 priests came from the seminary in these years) and all those who read the Monastery's publications, which were all solid works of Orthodox piety

Archbishop Vitaly of Jordanville (†1960)
Abbot of Holy Trinity Monastery, renowned missionary
of Pochaev and Carpatho-Russia

and theology. His sermons appeared frequently in the Monastery's bimonthly publication, *Orthodox Russia*, and his own books included textbooks on Homiletics and the interpretation of the New Testament (2 volumes), collections of his sermons and articles, and works on the life and letters of his beloved Abba, Archbishop Theophan.

All of the writings of Archbishop Averky bear one and the same character of love for God's truth, righteous zeal in expressing it, and urgent exhortation to others to follow it.

The abundance with which his golden lips gushed the sweet honey of the pure teaching of Orthodoxy, especially in his most fruitful last years, has perhaps helped to hide from us the rarity and even uniqueness of his teaching in our evil days. We have grown so used to his flaming and bold words that we have not noticed that he was virtually the only hierarch of any Orthodox church writing in any language with such boldness and uprightness in defense of Orthodoxy.

In earlier centuries the Church had many Holy Fathers writing in defense of Orthodoxy against the numerous heresies which attacked her singly or together. But in our day, when Orthodox Christians are losing the savor of Orthodoxy and virtually all the Local Orthodox Churches are giving in to the apostasy of our times, his voice was almost the only one to continue speaking the truth with such vigor and boldness, even amid the many infirmities of his old age. Truly, he was a champion of Orthodoxy in our age when faith is growing cold.

His view of the contemporary world was sober, precise, and entirely inspired by the Sacred Scripture and Holy Fathers of the Church: He taught that we live in the age of the Apostasy, the falling away from true Christianity, when the "mystery of iniquity" has entered its final stage of preparation for the "man of sin," Antichrist (II Thes. 2:3-12). Archbishop Averky traced the development of this Apostasy in particular from the time of the schism of the Church of Rome (1054), through the era of Humanism, the Renaissance and Reformation, the French Revolution, 19th-century materialism and communism, culminating in the Russian Revolution of 1917, which removed the last great barrier to the

working of the mystery of iniquity and the coming of Antichrist. (See his book, *True Orthodoxy and the Contemporary World*, Jordanville, 1971, pp. 18-21; the quotes that follow are all from this book.)

In such an age, he writes, "to be a true Orthodox Christian, ready unto death to preserve one's faithfulness to Christ the Saviour, in our days is much more difficult than in the first centuries of Christianity" (p. 17). Although often open (in the lands under communist control), the persecution against Christianity today is more often hidden. "Under the covering of a deceptive outward appearance that looks good and leads many into error, in actuality there is occurring evrywhere today a *hidden* persecution against Christianity. . . .This persecution is much more dangerous and frightful than the previous open persecution, for it threatens a complete devastation of souls—spiritual death" (18). He often quoted the words of Bishop Theophan the Recluse about the latter times: "Although the name of Christian will be heard everywhere, and everywhere there will be churches and church services, all this will be only an appearance, while within there will be a true apostasy" (21).

In fulfilment of these words in our own days, Archbishop Averky writes, "The Christian world, it is frightful to say, presents today a frightful, cheerless picture of the most profound religious and moral decadence" (22). The temptation of worldly comfort and prosperity drive God away from the soul. "The servants of antichrist more than anything else strive to force God out of the life of men, so that men, satisfied with their material comfort, might not feel any need to turn to God in prayer, might not remember God, but might live as though He did not exist. Therefore, the whole order of today's life in the so-called 'free' countries, where there is no open bloody persecution against faith, where everyone has the right to believe as he wishes, is an even greater danger for the soul of a Christian (than open persecution), for it chains him entirely to the earth, compelling him to forget about heaven. The whole of contemporary 'culture,' directed to purely earthly attainments and the frantic whirlpool of life bound up with it, keeps a man in a constant state of emptiness and distraction which give no opportunity for one to go at least a little deeper into his

soul, and so the spiritual life in him gradually dies out" (29). All of contemporary life, on the public level, is a preparation for the coming of Antichrist: "All that is happening today on the highest levels of religion, government, and public life. . . is nothing else than an intense work of preparation by the servants of the coming Antichrist for his future kingdom" (24), and this work is being done as much by "Christians" as by non-Christians (18).

After painting such a grim picture of the present and future, Archbishop Averky calls on Orthodox Christians to struggle against the spirit of this world that lies in evil. "All who in the present day desire to preserve faithfulness to Christ the Saviour must guard themselves especially against every attraction towards earthly goods and against being deceived by them. It is extremely dangerous to give oneself over to every desire to make a career for oneself, to make a name for oneself, to obtain authority and influence in society, to acquire wealth, to surround oneself with luxury and comfort" (28).

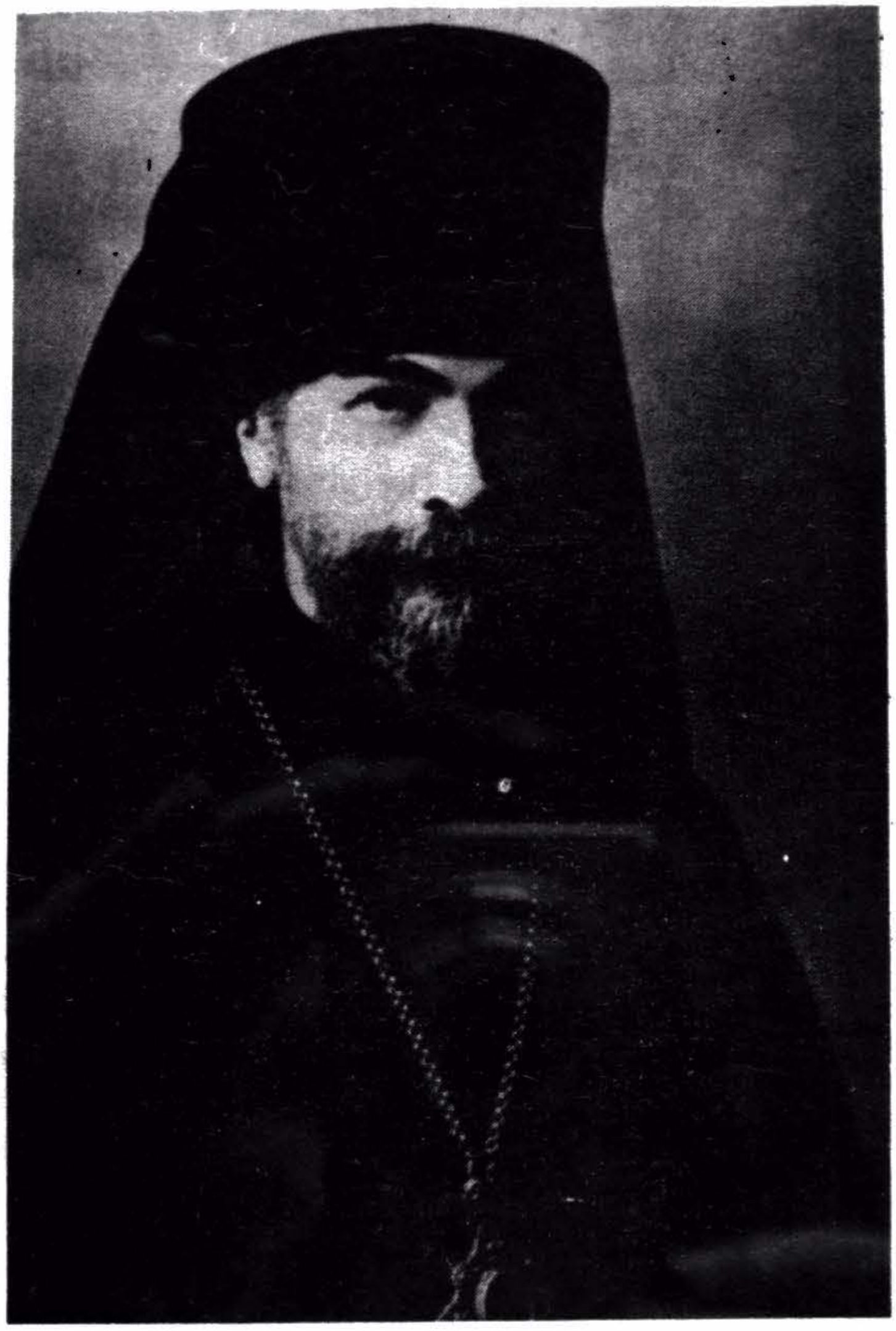
To those willing to struggle to preserve their faith, Archbishop Averky offers a sober and inspiring path of confession: "Now is the *time of confession*—of a firm standing, if need be even to death, for one's Orthodox faith, which is being subjected everywhere to open and secret attacks, oppression, and persecution on the part of the servants of the coming Antichrist" (28). We must be true Christians, not giving in to the spirit of the times, making the Church the center of our lives (26). Giving thanks to God for the existence of our Russian Church Outside of Russia, "which has not tainted itself by submitting to the dark powers of Antichrist that are acting in the contemporary world" (24), we must be "its faithful and devoted children, and at the same time its missionaries, fighters for the true faith of Christ, both in the non-Orthodox environment that surrounds us and among the Russian people who have fallen away or are falling away from it" (27). We must lead a conscious life of prayer, nourished by the reading of Scripture and the Holy Fathers and by frequent confession and reception of Holy Communion (30).

The path ahead of us, despite the deceptive promises of modern "progress," is a path of suffering: "The Lord has clearly said that it is not 'progress' that awaits us, but ever greater tribulations and

misfortunes as a result of the increase of lawlessness and the growing cold of love; when He comes, He will scarcely find faith on earth (Luke 18:8)."

The strength of the true Christian in the terrible times ahead is the apocalyptic expectation of the Second Coming of Christ: "The spirit of a constant expectation of the Second Coming of Christ is the original Christian spirit, which cries out in prayer to the Lord: *Even so, come, Lord Jesus* (Apoc. 22:20). And the spirit opposed to this is undoubtedly the spirit of Antichrist, which strives by every means to draw Christians away from the thought of the Second Coming of Christ and the recompense which follows on it. Those who give in to this spirit subject themselves to the danger of not recognizing Antichrist when he comes and of falling into his nets. Precisely this is the most frightful thing in the contemporary world, which is filled with every possible deception and temptation. The servants of Antichrist, as the Lord Himself has forewarned us, will try, 'if possible, to deceive the very elect' (Matt. 24:24). The thought of this, however, should not oppress or crush us, but on the contrary, as the Lord Himself says, *Then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh* (Luke 21:28)."

It is such a man, a true Holy Father of these latter times, filled with the Christian apocalyptic expectation of Christ's Second Coming and with the sober Orthodox spirit of preparedness for it, who is the author of the following commentary on the culminating book of the New Testament Scriptures, the Apocalypse of St. John the Theologian. Although his interpretation of the book is based solidly on the early Fathers of the Church, the very fact that he himself is so much in their spirit, and in the spirit of St. John, is a pledge for us of the accuracy of his commentary, as well as of the fact that it can speak not merely to our curious minds, but also and above all to our believing hearts. Archbishop Averky was an Orthodox scholar in the unbroken tradition of patristic thought which has come down to us from the ancient Fathers to our own days, and which he imbibed most of all in his own teachers, the 19th-century Theophan (the Recluse, †1894) and the 20th-century Theophan (of Poltava, †1940). An unblemished teacher of the



Archbishop Theophan of Poltava

Orthodox moral and spiritual life, he is also an unrivalled theological and patristic guide for us.

There are few saints left in our pitiful times. But even if we do not see about us now such upright and righteous ones as he, his teaching remains with us and can be our guiding beacon in the even darker days ahead which he foresaw, when the Church may have to go into the wilderness, like the Woman of the Apocalypse (ch. 12)—the Church of the last times.

Translator's Introduction
to Archbishop Averky's Commentary on the Apocalypse

Our times, more than any before us, are "apocalyptic." It has become realistic politics to speak of the possibility of the annihilation of whole countries and even of the whole of humanity, whether by nuclear weapons or by the production of the modern "monsters' of pollution, chemical and biological experiments, and the like.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the book of the Apocalypse (Revelation) has attracted widespread interest today as never before. However, much of the interest in it is very superficial, as may be seen in a popular book of our times, Hal Lindsay's *The Late Great Planet Earth.* Someone interested in world affairs and a believer in the truth of the Bible can read this book (which has sold over ten million copies in the United States) in a single sitting and be extremely impressed about how everything "fits together," how the prophecies of the Apocalypse seem to apply directly to our own times. Identifications are made of Scriptural personages and symbols: the "king of the south," the "king of the north," "Gog," "Magog," and many others; and the events associated with these names in Scripture are applied to contemporary history and future projections based on it with regard to Russia, China, Europe, Israel,

the Arab countries, etc. In such books as this one is told to "watch what Russia does next," "look at Iran," "a tenth nation will join the Common Market" of Europe, etc. All this can make one very excited, almost dizzy, in an agony of suspense over what apocalyptic event will occur next.

But this is not the way we should be reading the book of the Apocalypse. Some of these identifications may turn out to be accurate; others will turn out to be the product of a fevered imagination. But it is all on a superficial level which does not help us to save our souls; we should approach Bibilical prophecy, and in particular the book of the Apocalypse, in a quite different way.

AIDS TO THE INTERPRETATION OF THE APOCALYPSE

The difficult images and symbols of the Apocalypse are best examined separately in a reliable Orthodox commentary like that of Archbishop Averky, who has taken as his chief source the 5th-century commentary of St. Andrew of Caesarea, who in turn sums up the earlier Patristic commentaries on this book (some of which no longer exist). But it will also help us, in approaching this book to keep in mind the general aids to the interpretation of Scripture which have been utilized in such commentaries.

1. In some cases, the Scripture itself interprets its own difficult images. In the Apocalypse, for example, when our Lord Jesus Christ was seen in the first vision in the midst of seven golden candlesticks with seven stars in His right hand, He Himself explained the meaning of these two images to St. John (Apoc. 1:20). Similarly, the angels who appeared to the Prophet Daniel explained for him some of the symbols seen in his visions (Daniel 7:16-27; 8:16-26; etc.)—symbols which themselves are related to the content of the Apocalypse.

2. Parallel passages in other books of Scripture often shed light on or even directly explain some of the difficult images in the Apocalypse. The book of Daniel and other Old Testament prophets are especially helpful in this regard, as are the New Testament books that describe the coming of Antichrist. The fact that there are a number of Orthodox commentaries on these other

books helps to make up for the fact that there are so few on the Apocalypse itself.

3. A knowledge of Orthodox doctrine in general—and in particular of Orthodox eschatology (the doctrine of the last things, including the end of this world)—is an indispensable part of any study of the Apocalypse. Without it, Protestant interpreters have gone astray into a multitude of fanciful opinions about the Apocalypse (for example, notions of the "millenium," the "rapture," etc.) which only lead readers astray and, in many cases, actually prepare them to accept Antichrist in place of Christ. The general account of the events preceding and accompanying the end of the world contained in the other New Testament Scriptures (Matthew chs. 24-25, Mark ch. 13, Luke ch. 21, II Peter ch. 3, II Timothy ch. 4, I Thessalonians chs. 4-5, II Thessalonians ch. 2, Romans ch. 1, I Corinthians ch. 15—all interpreted, of course, in accordance with the commentaries of the Holy Fathers) gives an outline of the Church's eschatological teaching which places the events described in the Apocalypse in their proper dogmatic and historical context.

4. Also, helpful is an historical examination of the book itself—the author, time and place of writing, and most of all, its purpose—all within the context of Orthodox tradition and piety, and not in the spirit of the rationalistic criticism of modern times, which often destroys the meaning of the book in its concern to be in harmony with academic fashion. Archbishop Averky's Introduction supplies this examination for Orthodox readers.

5. A knowledge of ancient languages, geography, history, archeology, etc., can sometimes throw light on various passages of Scripture.

6. More important than any specific scientific knowledge, however, is a general view and philosophy of history and culture. To understand some of the visions of the Apocalypse (and the Old Testament book of Daniel to which it is so closely related), one must have a grasp of the meaning of the succession of world monarchies and of the one unending monarchy of Christ which replaces them. Further, one can better understand Antichrist by studying ancient tyrants (such as Antiochus Epiphanes) and the modern rulers

(truly forerunners of Antichrist) who attempted world conquest—Napoleon, Hitler, Communism.

With these aids the context of the Apocalypse, difficult as it sometimes is, may be fairly well understood. However, since the book is so much composed of symbols and figurative images, we should make a special note on the different levels of meaning in the Holy Scripture.

LITERAL VS. SYMBOLICAL OR MYSTICAL MEANINGS

Many would-be interpreters of Scripture go astray precisely on this point, whether by a too-literal understanding (as in the case of the Protestant Fundamentalists who come close to believing that *everything* in the Bible is "literally" true) or a too free interpretation (as in the case of the liberals who dismiss everything difficult to believe as "symbolic" or "allegorical"). In the Orthodox interpretation of Scripture these two levels of meaning, the literal and the symbolical are often intertwined.

There are many passages, to be sure, that are only meant to be understood literally; such are the strictly historical parts of Scripture (for example: "I John. . .was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day"—Apoc. 1:9-10). Theoretically, every point in such historical statements could be checked for accuracy by means of eye-witnesses, primary documents, early church historians, etc. Metaphorical statements, as when natural things are spoken of in poetic images ("The sun knoweth his going down"—Ps. 103) may also be classed under the literal sense of Scripture, as are those cases when actions or qualities of God are spoken of in earthly terms, or when bodily members or passions are ascribed to God (God grew angry, or repented, or walked in Paradise). These kinds of meaning can still be classed as "literal" (even though they are not strictly so) because they only attempt to describe reality as it is (whether earthly of Divine) and not to refer to something else entirely.

Symbolical meanings, on the other hand, can be of several kinds. There are, for example, *prefigurations*, when historical persons or events are used as *types* or foreshadowings of events

in the life of Christ (for example, Jonah's three days in the whale, prefiguring Christ's three days in the grave—Matt. 12:40); *symbols*, when Divinely-inspired actions indicate God's will or revelation (for example, the bonds and yokes which Jeremiah put on, signifying the Babylonian captivity—Jer. ch. 27; or the girdle of St. Paul which the prophet Agabus wound around himself, indicating the Apostle's imprisonment in Jerusalem—Acts 21:11). In both these kinds of symbolical meaning the literal, historical meaning of the text is also true.

In what one might call *mystical images*, when a deeper, spiritual meaning is given to some earthly person, thing or event, the literal sense is also retained—as, for example, with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Paradise, which St. Gregory the Theologian interpreted as "contemplation" without thereby denying that it was also a tree; or the tree of life, which besides being a prefiguration of the Cross of Christ is also an image of the future eternal life, without ceasing to be a literal tree in a literal garden, as Patristic tradition makes clear.

There is also *allegory*, in which a fictitious story is used as symbolizing a higher reality; this is rather rare in Scripture, and is chiefly limited to such forms as *parables and apologues*—instructive stories and fables in which the literal story itself need not be true (although in some parables it may be true). Even the *Song of Songs*, a kind of allegory of the love between Christ and the Church, has a historical reference to the love between Solomon and his Egyptian bride.

The *visions* of the Apocalypse, on the other hand, make use of symbols of a little different kind from all the above. Sometimes they present heavenly realities in forms adapted to the understanding of the seer (the vision of Christ in chapter 1; of heaven in chs. 4-7; of the future age in chs. 21-22); sometimes they present allegorical pictures of the Church and her life (the "woman clothed with the sun" in ch. 12, the "thousand years" of the Church's existence in ch. 20), or of specific beings that war against the Church (the dragon in ch. 12, the two beasts of ch. 13), or of future events, whether general (the four horsemen of ch. 6) or specific (the seven last plagues of ch. 15).

The interpretation of all these images—to the degree that it is accessible to us now, before all the prophecies have been fulfilled—is set forth in the text of the commentary. Here we shall give only a few final words of warning and preparation for the reader.

1. We should not be overdefinite or overly narrow in our interpretation of these images and visions. Many of the symbols of the Apocalypse are so sweeping in their application that no simple prose formula can encompass them; a man of richer experience and knowledge will see more in them than someone who lacks these. Too, as history proceeds to its end, the meaning of some of the images will become clearer. Archbishop Averky himself notes that some of the images simply cannot be understood yet, while of others (for example, the "locusts" and "horses" of ch. 9) he hazards interpretations based on the 20th-century experience or warfare.

2. We must be careful to distinguish between the passages that refer to realities of this fallen world of earth, and those that refer to the other world, heaven. Misinterpretations of the Apocalypse invariably confuse these two spheres by trying to apply prophetic visions about the other world (where sickness and sorrow have an end, there is no death, and "the leopard shall lie down with the kid" —Is. 11:6) to this earthly world; this is the fatal mistake of the chiliastic interpretation which prevails among Protestants today, which understands the "thousand years" of chapter 20 as a kind of "heavenly" historical epoch and applies to the earthly Jerusalem the Old Testament prophecies which can refer only to the heavenly Jerusalem in the age to come.

Sometimes even Orthodox commentators will have varying interpretations of these visions with their images. We should not, however, be quick to look for "contradictions" in this fact. With symbolic language it often happens that images have *multiple meanings* and levels of interpretation. Thus, the strange creatures of chapter 9 may indicate frightful modern weapons, but they may also symbolize demons and the actions of human passions; the "great star" of chapter 8 may be a meteor or missile or some other physical cause of destruction, but it may also symbolize the devil.

3. The chiliastic interpretation of the Apocalypse proceeds also from another basic mistake of most Protestant interpreters: to take the text of the book in strict *chronological* order instead of seeing it as it is: a series of visions quite distinct in nature from each other—some of heaven, some of earth; some very general and symbolic, some quite specific and literal; some of the past, some of the future, and some of the present. To identify each of these visions for what it is requires a precise Orthodox commentary and not simply a reading of the text as it appears to our modern understanding. The present book is an attempt to supply this much-needed Orthodox commentary.

4. Our reading of the Apocalypse should be one not of fevered excitement but of sober awareness. Our first concern should be to gain an understanding of the Orthodox doctrine and world view which are contained in the book; about specific applications of prophecies to contemporary events we should be slow to form a judgment and not be carried away by our own opinions and fantasies.

5. It is very important that the reading of this book should be done together with regular spiritual nourishment—the Church's services and sacraments, regular reading of Scripture and spiritual books. It this is done, and our Orthodox Christianity is a *conscious struggle* conducted daily and constantly—then we will not be overwhelmed by some new catastrophe or some new fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy.

6. With all this in mind, we must understand that the Apocalypse is a book of *mysteries*—the deep things bound up with the beginning and end of all things, the ultimate purpose of the world and man, the opening of the eternal Kingdom of Heaven; and so we must read it with *fear of God*, and with a *humble distrust* of our own wisdom.

THE APOCALYPSE—A BOOK FOR OUR TIMES

The subject of the Apocalypse is a mystical depiction of the future fate of the Church of Christ and of the whole world; it describes the battle of the Church against all its enemies and its final triumph over them. Thus, the reading of this book is a great consolation especially in times of persecutions and discouragements

for Christians—such as our own times. Historical events which we see about us are placed in the context of the whole battle of the Church against the powers of evil, and the final victory of the Church and the opening of the unending Kingdom of Heaven.

Members of the Catacomb Church in Russia today invariably see themselves in terms of the persecuted woman in the wilderness (Apocalypse, ch. 12) and thereby gain strength from God for their most difficult struggle. When the powers of evil take such a strong form as that of a totalitarian atheist government, it is very easy to give up the battle if one does not have a picture of the *meaning* of this seeming triumph of evil, and a knowledge of the eventual triumph of good and Christ's Church.

Much interest was shown in this book in the Church of the first Christian centuries, when it seemed that the events depicted there might be close to fulfillment. However, the temptation of chiliasm, into which even some of the early teachers of the Church fell (St. Irenaeus of Lyons, St. Justin the Philosopher), together with the peace and stability of the age of Constantine, when the empire itself became Christian—led to a waning of apocalyptic thinking in the Church and a general neglect of the book. Even its place in the New Testament canon was uncertain until the 4th century, and some of the great Fathers of the Church hardly mention it. As Archbishop Averky states, it is the one New Testament book which has no regular place in the Scripture readings during church services, even though the Typicon does give it a place in a part of the services which is seldom if ever performed in our days. (At the Saturday night Vigil, all the New Testament Epistles and the Apocalypse are appointed to be read in order between Vespers and Matins, beginning with the Sunday of All Saints.)

Some great Fathers, however, did make use of the Apocalypse: among the 3rd and 4th century Fathers one can name St. Hippolytus of Rome, St. Cyprian of Carthage, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Ambrose of Milan, St. Athanasius the Great, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, and Blessed Augustine. Some of their interpretations of the book will be given in the footnotes.

The one main Patristic commentary on the book is that of St. Andrew of Caesarea in the 5th century, which rejects the main misinterpretations of earlier centuries and gives the Orthodox

understanding of such points as the "thousand years" of Christ's reign with His saints (ch. 20). In the present work, in addition to St. Andrew's commentary, Archbishop Averky has made use of 19th and 20th century Russian Orthodox scholarship on the Apocalypse, as well as his own observations on the apocalyptic events of our times.

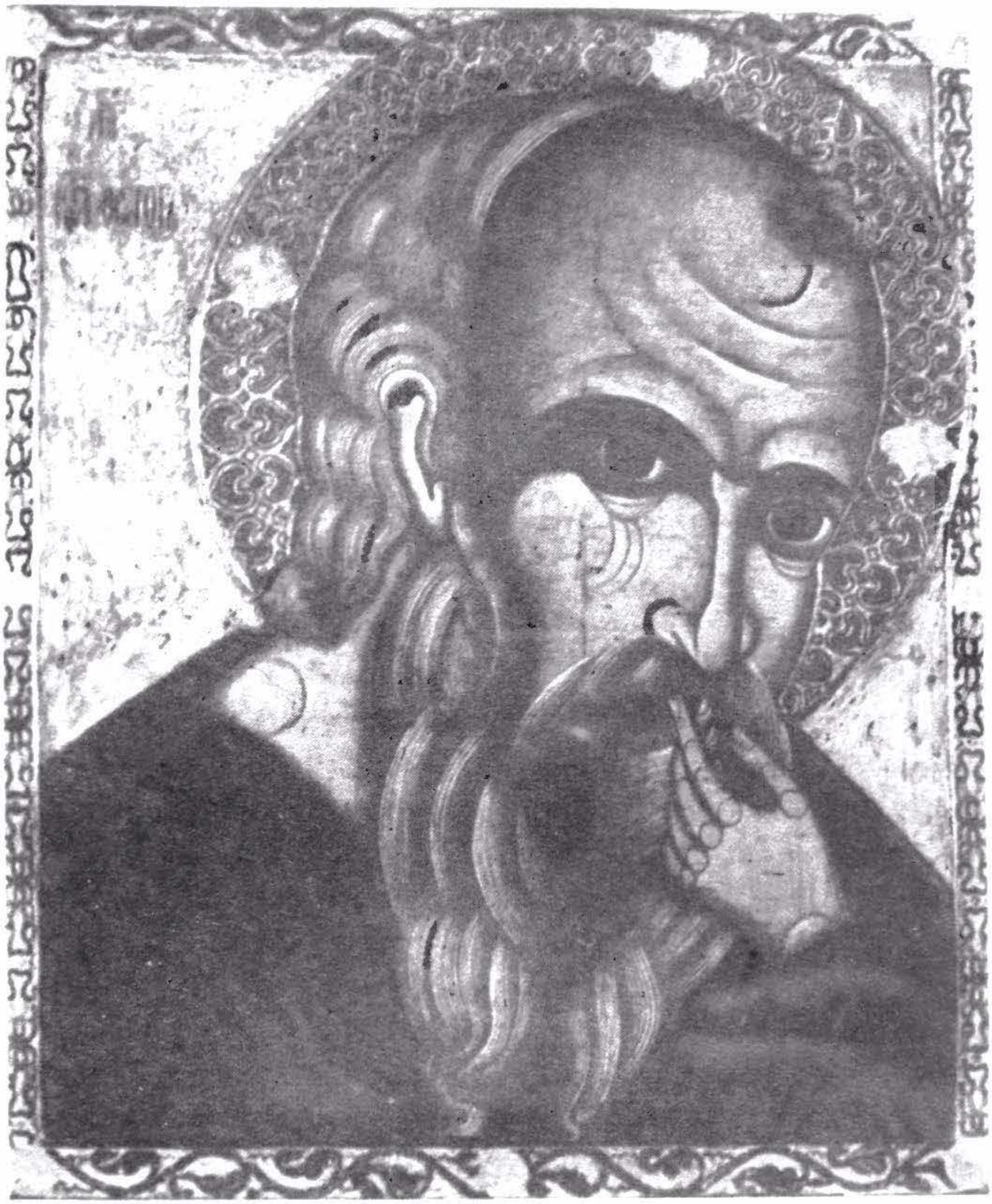
We do seem, indeed, to be living in the last times of this world's existence, when the prophecies of the Apocalypse relating to the end of the world are beginning to be fulfilled. The time is surely ripe—especially in view of the numerous false interpretations of this book which fill the contemporary air—for a fully Orthodox commentary on it.

May Orthodox Christians gain from it a sober awareness of the signs of these times and learn to prepare themselves to endure to the end the trials and tribulations which are coming upon us!

The text of the Apocalypse used in this book is that of the King James Version of the New Testament. Since the understanding of the Apocalypse is so dependent upon the text of other books of Scripture, the parallel places in other books which are cited in Archbishop Averky's commentary are given more fully at the end of each chapter, in the order in which they appear in the text. These citations are taken: the New Testament, from the King James Version; the Old Testament, from the KJV or the Septuagint (Bagster), as indicated.

The text of Archbishop Averky did not include the whole text of the Apocalypse which he was interpreting. In this translation, this whole text has been furnished, so that the translation proceeds verse by verse. In some cases, explanatory material from St. Andrew's commentary which Archbishop Averky did not cite has been added in order to provide a commentary on every verse. The aim of Archbishop Averky, however, and of this translation, has been not to make an exhaustive interpretation of the text of the Apocalypse (which would require a book many times longer), but rather to provide a brief and practical understanding of the book for serious Orthodox Christians of these latter times.

The footnotes, which chiefly attempt to give explanatory material from other books of Scripture and from the Holy Fathers, are those of the translator and are so identified.



ST. JOHN THE THEOLOGIAN

16th-century North Russian School

The Apocalypse of St. John

An Orthodox Commentary
by
Archbishop Averky of Jordanville

INTRODUCTION

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE APOCALYPSE AND THE INTEREST IN IT

The *Apocalypse* or, as it is translated from the Greek, the *Revelation* of St. John the Theologian, is the only prophetic book of the New Testament. It is the natural culmination of the whole cycle of the New Testament sacred books.

In the books of the Law, of history, and of instruction, the Christian draws knowledge concerning the foundation and historical growth of the life of the Church of Christ, as well as guidance for his own personal activity in life. In the Apocalypse, however, there are given to the believing mind and heart mystical prophetic indications of the future fate of the Church and of the whole world. The Apocalypse is a mystical book which gives itself to a correct understanding and interpretation only with great difficulty; as a consequence, the Church typicon does not indicate readings from it during the time of the Divine Services.

But at the same time, it is precisely this mystical character of the book that draws to it the gaze both of believing Christians and of simply curious thinkers. Over the course of the whole New Testament history of humanity, men have striven to decipher the significance and meaning of the puzzling visions described in it. There exists an immense literature about the Apocalypse, including many absurd works which touch on the origin and content of this

mystical book. One might indicate, as one of such works in recent times, the book of N. A. Morozov, *The Revelation in Thunder and Storm.* Proceeding from the preconceived idea that the visions described in the Apocalypse depict, with the precision of an astronomical observer, the condition of the sky with its stars at some definite moment of time, Morozov makes astronomical calculations and comes to the conclusion that such precisely was the sky with its stars on Sept. 30, 395. Replacing the persons, actions and pictures of the Apocalypse with planets, stars, and constellations, Morozov makes broad use of indefinite, vague forms in the clouds, making them take the place of the missing names of stars, planets, and constellations in order to depict the full picture of the sky corresponding to the facts of the Apocalypse. If even the clouds do not help him, with all the softness and the receptivity of this material in capable hands, then Morozov redoes the text of the Apocalypse to fit the meaning which he needs. Such a free and easy attitude towards the text of Sacred Scripture Morozov justifies either by the mistakes and the ignorance of the copyists of the Apocalypse, "who did not understand the astronomical meaning of the picture," or even by the idea that the writer of the Apocalypse himself, "thanks to his preconceived idea," made forced interpretations in describing the picture of the sky with its stars. By such a "scientific" method, N. A. Morozov determines that the writer of the Apocalypse was St. John Chrysostom (347-407), Archbishop of Constantinople. To the total historical absurdity of his conclusions, Morozov pays no attention whatsoever.

In our times—the period of the First World War and the Russian Revolution, and then the yet more frightful Second World War, when mankind has experienced so many terrible shocks and misfortunes—the attempts to interpret the Apocalypse as applied to the events being experienced have increased yet more. Some of these attempts have been more, some less successful.

In making such attempts there is one important and essential thing to remember: In interpreting the Apocalypse, as in general in interpreting any book in Sacred Scripture, it is essential to make use of the facts given in the other sacred books which enter into the composition of our Bible, as well as of the works of interpretation of the Holy Fathers and the teachers of the Church. Among the special patristic works in the interpretation of the

Apocalypse, especially valuable is the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* of St. Andrew, Archbishop of Caesarea,* which gives a summary of the whole understanding of the Apocalypse in the pre-Nicean period (before the First Ecumenical Council in 325). Likewise very valuable is the Apology on the Apocalypse by St. Hippolytus of Rome (about 230).

In more recent times there have appeared so many works of commentary on the Apocalypse that there were already 90 of them by the end of the 19th century (in the Russian language). Among the Russian works the most valuable are: 1) A. Zhdanov, *The Revelation of the Lord Concerning the Seven Churches of Asia* (an attempt to explain the first three chapters of the Apocalypse); 2) Bishop Peter, *Explanation of the Apocalypse of the Holy Apostle John the Theologian;* 3) N. A. Nikolsky, *The Apocalypse and the False Prophecy Exposed by It;* 4) N. Vinogradov, *Concerning the Final Fate of the World and of Mankind,* and 5) M. Barsov, *Collection of Essays for the Interpretation and Edifying Reading of the Apocalypse.*

CONCERNING THE WRITER OF THE APOCALYPSE

The writer of the Apocalypse calls himself "John" (Apoc. 1:1, 4:9). In the common belief of the Church, this was the holy Apostle John, the beloved disciple of Christ, who for the height of his teaching concerning God the Word received the distinctive title of "Theologian." To his inspired pen belongs also the fourth canonical Gospel and three catholic epistles. This belief of the Church is justified both by facts indicated in the Apocalypse itself, and by many inward and outward signs.

1) The writer of the Apocalypse calls himself "John" at the very beginning, saying that to him was given the Revelation of Jesus Christ (1:1). Further, greeting the seven churches of Asia Minor, he again calls himself "John" (1:4). Later he speaks of himself, again calling himself "John," saying that he was in the *isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony*

---

* Almost nothing is known of St. Andrew apart from his authorship of this *Commentary.* He lived apparently in the 5th century or a little later and quotes also 4th-century Fathers such as St. Gregory the Theologian.

of Jesus Christ (1:9). From the history of the Apostles it is known that it is precisely St. John the Theologian who was subjected to exile on the island of Patmos. And finally, at the end of the Apocalypse, the writer again calls himself "John" (22:8). In the second verse of the first chapter he calls himself an eyewitness of Jesus Christ (compare I John 1:3).

The opinion that the Apocalypse was written by a certain "Presbyter John" is totally without foundation. The very existence of this "Presbyter John" as a person separate from the Apostle John is rather dubious. The only testimony which gives reason to speak about "Presbyter John" is a passage from a work of Papias which has been preserved by the historian Eusebius. It is extremely indefinite and gives opportunity only for guesses and suppositions which contradict each other. Likewise the opinion is totally without foundation that ascribes the writing of the Apocalypse to John Mark, that is, the Evangelist Mark. Even more absurd is the opinion of the Roman presbyter Caius (3rd century) that the Apocalypse was written by the heretic Cerinthus.

2) The second proof that the Apocalypse belongs to the Apostle John the Theologian is its similarity to the Gospel and epistles of John, not only in spirit but also in style, and especially in several characteristic expressions. Thus, for example, the apostolic preaching is called here "testimony" or "witness" (Apoc. 1:2,9; 20:4; compare John 1:7, 3:11, 21:24, and I John 5:9-10). The Lord Jesus Christ is called "the Word" (Apoc. 19:13; compare John 1:1-14, and I John 1:1) as well as "the Lamb" (Apoc. 5:6 and 17:14; compare John 1:36). The prophetic words of Zechariah, *And they shall look on Him Whom they pierced* (Zech. 12:10), is cited identically both in the Gospel and the Apocalypse according to the translation of the Seventy (Septuagint; Apoc. 1:7 and John 19:37).

Some have found that the language of the Apocalypse is supposedly to be distinguished from the language of the other writings of the Holy Apostle John. This difference is easily to be explained, both by the difference of content and by the conditions in which the writings of the holy Apostle had their origin. The Holy Apostle John, even though he knew well the Greek language, still, finding himself in exile far from the living conversational Greek language, naturally placed in the Apocalypse the seal of the powerful influence

of the Hebrew language, being himself a native Jew. For the objective reader of the Apocalypse there is no doubt that on its whole content there lies the seal of the great spirit of the Apostle of love and contemplation.

3) All the ancient as well as later patristic testimonies acknowledge as the author of the Apocalypse St. John the Theologian. His disciple, Papias of Hierapolis, calls the writer of the Apocalypse "Elder John," a name which the holy Apostle gives to himself in his own epistles (II John 1, III John 1).

The testimony of St. Justin the Martyr is also important. Before his conversion to Christianity he lived for a long time in Ephesus, the city where the great Apostle himself lived for a long time and reposed.

Further, many Holy Fathers cite passages from the Apocalypse as from a Divinely-inspired book belonging to St. John the Theologian. Such quotations are to be found in the works of St. Irenaeus of Lyons, the disciple of St. Polycarp of Smyrna, who himself was the disciple of St. John the Theologian; St. Hippolytus, Pope of Rome and disciple of Irenaeus, who even wrote an apology on the Apocalypse; Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Origen likewise acknowledge the holy Apostle John as the writer of the Apocalypse. In the same way Ephraim the Syrian, Epiphanius, Basil the Great, Hilary, Athanasius the Great, Gregory the Theologian, Didymus, Ambrose, Augustine and Jerome were convinced of this. The thirty-third canon of the Council of Carthage, ascribing the Apocalypse to St. John the Theologian, places it in the rank of the other canonical books. The absence of the Apocalypse in the Syrian translation (Peshito) is explained solely by the fact that this translation was made for reading at Divine services, and the Apocalypse was not read during Divine services. In the 60th canon of the Council of Laodicea the Apocalypse is not mentioned, since the mystical content of the book did not allow it to be recommended to all, since it could give rise to false interpretations.

THE TIME AND PLACE OF THE WRITING OF THE APOCALYPSE

We do not have precise facts concerning the time of the writing of the Apocalypse. However, ancient tradition indicates for this

the end of the first century. Thus St. Irenaeus writes, "The Apocalypse appeared not long before this and almost in our time, at the end of the reign of Domitian" (*Against Heresies*, 5:30). The church historian Eusebius states that the pagan writers contemporary to him mention also the exile of the holy Apostle John on the island of Patmos for his testimony of the Divine Word, and they refer this even to the 15th year of the reign of Domitian, 95 or 96 A.D. Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Blessed Jerome affirm the same thing.

The Church writers of the first three centuries are in agreement also in indicating the place of the writing of the Apocalypse: the island of Patmos, which is referred to by the Apostle himself as the place where he received the revelations (Apoc. 1:9-10). But after the discovery of the 6th-century Syrian translation of the Apocalypse, (the "Pokoke"), where, in a superscription, Nero is named in place of Domitian, many began to refer the writing of the Apocalypse to the time of Nero, that is, in the '60's of the first century. St. Hippolytus of Rome likewise ascribes to Nero the exile of St. John to the island of Patmos. Such people likewise find that one cannot refer the time of the writing of the Apocalypse to the reign of Domitian because, judging from the first two verses of the eleventh chapter of the Apocalypse, the temple of Jerusalem was not yet destroyed at that time, since in these verses they see a prophecy of the future destruction of the temple—something which, under Domitian, had already been accomplished. The indication of the Roman emperors which some people find in the 10th verse of the 17th chapter fit more than anyone else the successors of Nero. They likewise find that the number of the beast (Apoc. 13:18) can be found in the name of Nero: *Nero Caesar, 666.* The very language of the Apocalypse, which is full of Hebraisms, likewise, in the opinion of certain people, indicates an earlier origin compared to the fourth Gospel and the epistles of St. John. The full name of Nero was: *Claudius Nero Domitius*, as a result of which one could also confuse him with the emperor Domitian, who reigned later. According to this opinion the Apocalypse was written about two years before the destruction of Jerusalem, that it, in the year 68 A.D.

Against this, however, it is objected that the condition of Christian life as it is presented in the Apocalypse speaks for a later date. Each of the seven Asia Minor churches which St. John addresses already has its own history and a direction of religious life which in one way or another has already been defined. Christianity in them is already not in its first stage of purity and truth; false Christianity strives to occupy a place in them side by side with true Christianity. All this presupposes that the activity of the holy Apostle Paul, who preached for a long time in Ephesus, was something that had occurred in the distant past. This point of view, founded upon the testimony of St. Irenaeus and Eusebius, refers the time of writing of the Apocalypse to the years 95-96 A.D.

On the other hand, it is quite difficult to accept the opinion of St. Epiphanius, who says that St. John returned from Patmos under Emperor Claudius (41-54 A.D.). Under Claudius there was no general persecution of Christians in the provinces, and there was only a banishment from Rome of the Jews, among whose number Christians might also be included. Likewise unbelievable is the supposition that the Apocalypse was written at a yet later time, under the Emperor Trajan (98-108 A.D.), when St. John had already ended his life.

Concerning the place of the writing of the Apocalypse there is another opinion: that it was written in Ephesus, after the return there of the Apostle from banishment. However, the first opinion is much more natural: that the epistle to the churches of Asia Minor which is contained in the Apocalypse was sent precisely from Patmos. It is also difficult to suppose that the holy Apostle did not immediately fulfill the command to write down what he had seen (Apoc. 1:10-11).

THE CHIEF SUBJECT AND AIM OF THE WRITING OF THE APOCALYPSE

In beginning the Apocalypse, St. John himself indicates the chief subject and aim of its writing: *to show things which must shortly come to pass* (1:1). Thus, the chief subject of the Apocalypse is a mystical depiction of the future fate of the Church of Christ and of the whole world. From the very beginning of its existence, the

Church of Christ had to enter into fierce battle with the errors of Judaism and paganism with the aim of effecting the triumph of the Divine Truth which had been brought to earth by the Incarnate Son of God, and through this to give to mankind blessedness and eternal life. The aim of the Apocalypse is to depict this battle of the Church and its triumph over all enemies, to show clearly the perdition of the enemies of the Church and the glorification of her faithful children. This was especially important and necessary for believers in those times, when frightful and bloody persecutions had begun against Christians, so as to give them consolation and encouragement in the sorrows and difficult trials which had overtaken them. This vivid picture of the battle of the dark kingdom of satan with the Church and the final victory of the Church over the "old serpent" (Apoc. 12:9) is necessary for the believers of all times for precisely the same reason: to console and strengthen them in the battle for the truth of the faith of Christ, a battle which they must always wage against the servants of the dark forces of hell, who strive in their blind malice to annihilate the Church.

THE CHURCH'S VIEW OF THE CONTENT OF THE APOCALYPSE

All the ancient Fathers of the Church who wrote commentaries on the sacred books of the New Testament unanimously look on the Apocalypse as a prophetic picture of the last times of the world and the events which are to be accomplished before the Second Coming of Christ on earth and at the opening of the Kingdom of Glory which is prepared for all truly believing Christians. Despite the darkness under which the mystical meaning of this book is hidden, as a consequence of which many unbelievers have striven in every way to defame it, the deeply enlightened Fathers and divinely-wise teachers of the Church have always had great respect for it.

Thus, St. Dionysius of Alexandria writes: "The darkness of this book does not prevent one from being astonished at it. And even if I do not understand everything in it, it is only because of my incapability. I cannot be a judge of the truths which are contained in it or measure them with the poverty of my mind; being

guided more by faith than by understanding. I find them only surpassing my understanding." Blessed Jerome expresses himself concerning the Apocalypse in a similar spirit: "In it there are as many mysteries as words. But what am I saying? Every praise of this book will be beneath its worth."

Many consider that even Caius, the presbyter of Rome, did not consider the Apocalypse to be the work of the heretic Cerinthus, as some infer from his words; for Caius speaks not of the book called "The Revelation", but of "revelations." Eusebius himself, who quotes these words of Caius, does not say a word about the fact that Cerinthus was the author of the bock The Apocalypse. Blessed Jerome and other Fathers who knew this passage in the works of Caius and acknowledged the authenticity of the Apocalypse, would not have left this without reply if they considered the words of Caius as referring to the Apocalypse of St. John the Theologian.

But at Divine services the Apocalypse was not read and is not read. One must suppose that this is because in antiquity the reading of Holy Scripture at Divine services was always accompanied by an interpretation of it, and the Apocalypse is too difficult for (an ordinary) interpretation. This also explains its absence in the Syrian translation, the "Peshito," which was intended especially for use in Divine services. As has been shown by researchers, the Apocalypse was originally in the list of the "Peshito" and was excluded from it only after the time of St. Ephraim the Syrian. We know this because St. Ephraim quoted the Apocalypse in his works as a canonical book of the New Testament and uses it widely in his own Divinely-inspired writings.

RULES FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF THE APOCALYPSE

As a book of God's decrees concerning the world and the Church, the Apocalypse has always attracted to itself the attention of Christians, and especially in those times when outward persecutions and inward temptations have begun to disturb the faithful especially powerfully, threatening from all sides with all kinds of dangers. In such periods believers have naturally turned to this book for consolation and encouragement and have tried to use it

to decipher the meaning and significance of the events which are occurring. However, the figurativeness and the mystical quality of the book make it extremely difficult to understand. Therefore, for careless interpreters there is always the risk of being drawn beyond the boundaries of truth, and there is thus occasion for fantastic hopes and beliefs.

Thus, for example, a literalistic understanding of the images of this book has given occasion and even now continues to give occasion for the false teaching of "chiliasm"—the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. The terrors of the persecutions which were endured by Christians in the first century and were interpreted in the light of the Apocalypse gave occasion for some people to believe that the last times and the Second Coming of Christ were already at hand then, in the first century.

In the nineteen centuries which have since elapsed there have appeared a multitude of commentaries on the Apocalypse, and they have been of the most varied character. One may divide all these commentaries into four groups. Some of them refer all the visions and symbols of the Apocalypse to the "last times"—the end of the world, the appearance of Antichrist, and the Second Coming of Christ. Others give to the Apocalypse a purely historical significance, referring all the visions to the historical events of the first century—to the times of the persecutions raised against the church by the pagan emperors. A third group strives to find the realization of apocalyptic prophecies in the historical events of recent times. In their opinion, for example, the Pope of Rome is Antichrist, and all the apocalyptic misfortunes are announced in particular for the Church of Rome, etc. A fourth group, finally, sees in the Apocalypse only an allegory, considering that the visions described in it have not so much prophetic as a moral meaning, and allegory is introduced only to increase the impression, with the aim of striking the imagination of readers.

The most correct commentary, however, is one that unites all these approaches, keeping in mind that, as the ancient commentators and Fathers of the Church clearly taught, the content of the Apocalypse in its sum is indeed directed to *the last part of the history of the world.* There can be no doubt, moreover, that in

the course of the whole past history of Christianity many of the prophecies of the Apostle John concerning the future fate of the Church and the world have already been fulfilled. But great caution is required in applying the apocalyptic content to historical events, and one should not misuse this approach. One interpreter has rightly said that the content of the Apocalypse will only gradually become understandable to the degree that the events themselves approach and the prophecies uttered in the book are being fulfilled.

A correct understanding of the Apocalypse, to be sure, is hindered most of all by the departure of people from faith and true Christian life; this always makes people dull, and even leads to a complete loss of the spiritual vision which is essential for the correct understanding and spiritual evaluation of the events which occur in the world. The total devotion of contemporary man to sinful passions which deprive one of purity of heart, and consequently of spiritual vision (Matt. 5:8), serves as the cause of the fact that certain contemporary interpreters of the Apocalypse wish to see in it only an allegory and teach that even the Second Coming of Christ is to be understood allegorically. The historical events and persons of the times we are now experiencing—times which, in all justice, many already call "apocalyptic"—convince us of the fact that to see in the book of the Apocalypse only an allegory truly means to be spiritually blind. Everything now happening in the world does indeed remind one of the frightful images and visions of the Apocalypse.

THE CONTENT AND DIVISION OF THE APOCALYPSE

The Apocalypse contains in all twenty-two chapters. The book can be divided, according to its content, into the following sections:

1) An Introductory picture of the Son of God Who appeared to John commanding him to write to the seven churches of Asia Minor (ch. 1).

2) Instructions to the seven churches of Asia Minor: The churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (chs. 2 and 3).

3) The vision of God sitting on the throne, and the Lamb (chs. 4 and 5).

4) The opening by the Lamb of the seven seals of the mystical book (chs. 6 and 7).

5) The voices of the seven trumpets of the angels declaring various misfortunes to those living on the earth at the taking away of the seventh seal (chs. 8, 9, 10 and 11).

6) The Church of Christ in the image of the woman clothed with the sun who is in the pangs of childbirth (ch. 12).

7) The beast (Antichrist) and his helper, the false prophet (ch. 13).

8) Preparatory events before the general resurrection and the Last Judgment (chs. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19).

a) The hymn of praise of the 144,000 righteous ones; and the angels who declare the fate of the world (ch. 14).

b) The seven angels who have the seven last plagues (ch 15).

c) The seven angels who pour out the seven cups of the wrath of God (ch. 16).

d) The judgment upon the great harlot who sits on the many waters and is seated upon the scarlet beast (ch. 17).

e) The fall of Babylon, the great harlot (ch. 18).

f) The battle of the Word of God with the beast and his army, and the destruction of the latter (ch. 19).

9) The general resurrection and the Last Judgment (ch. 20).

10) The revelation of the new heaven and the new earth; the New Jerusalem and the blessedness of its inhabitants (chs. 21 and 22 to the 5th verse).

11) Conclusion: confirmation of the truth of everything said and the testament to preserve the commandments of God: the giving of a blessing (ch. 22:6-21).

Fresco from the refectory of Dionysiou Monastery, Mt. Athos

And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth. . .

(Apoc. 6:13)

St. John the Theologian on Patmos dictating the text of the Apocalypse

The Apocalypse of St. John

CHAPTER ONE

THE PURPOSE OF THE APOCALYPSE AND THE MEANS BY WHICH IT WAS GIVEN TO JOHN

1:1 *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass.*

These words clearly define the character and purpose of the Apocalypse as a prophetic book. By this the Apocalypse is to be essentially distinguished from the other books of the New Testament, the content of which is primarily one of instruction in faith and morals. The importance of the Apocalypse is evident here from the fact that its writing was the result of a direct revelation and a direct command given to the holy Apostle by the Head of the Church Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. The expression "shortly" indicates that the prophecies of the Apocalypse began to be fulfilled right then, immediately after the book was written, and likewise that in the eyes of God *a thousand years are as one day* (II Peter 3:8). The expression of the Apocalypse concerning the revelation of Jesus Christ, "which God gave unto Him," one must understand as referring to Christ in His human nature, for He Himself during His earthly life spoke of Himself as of one who did not know everything (Mark 13:32), and as one who receives revelations from the Father (John 5:20).

1:1-2 *And He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John, who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.*

1:3 *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand.*

The book of the Apocalypse has, consequently, not only a prophetic, but also a moral significance. The meaning of these words is as follows: Blessed is he who, reading this book, will prepare himself by his life and deeds of piety for eternity; for the translation to eternity is near for each of us.

1:4 *John to the seven churches which are in Asia.*

The number seven is usually taken as an expression of fulness. St. John addresses here only the seven churches with which he, as one who lived in Ephesus, was in especially close and frequent contact. But in these seven he addresses at the same time the Christian Church as a whole.

1:4 *Grace be unto you, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.*

"Grace to you and peace from the Tri-Hypostatical Divinity. The phrase 'which is' signifies the Father, Who said to Moses: *I am He that Is* (Ex. 3:14). The expression 'which was' signifies the Word, Who *was in the beginning with God* (John 1:2). The phrase 'which is to come' indicates the Comforter, Who always descends upon the Church's children in holy baptism and in all fulness is to descend in the future age (Acts, ch. 2)," (St. Andrew of Caesarea, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, ch. 1.)

1:4 *And from the seven spirits which are before His throne.*

By these "seven spirits" it is most natural to understand the seven chief angels who are spoken of in Tobit 12:15. St. Andrew of Caesarea, however, understands them to be the angels who govern the seven churches. Other commentaries, on the other

hand, understand by this expression the Holy Spirit Himself, Who manifests Himself in seven chief gifts: the spirit of the fear of God, the spirit of knowledge, the spirit of might, the spirit of light, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of the Lord or the spirit of piety and inspiration in the highest degree (compare Is. 11:1-3).

1:5 *And from Jesus Christ, Who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.*

The Lord Jesus Christ is called here "the faithful witness" in the sense that He has witnessed His Divinity and the truth of His teaching before men by His death on the Cross.

"As Life and Resurrection, He is *the first-born from the dead* (Col. 1:18; I Cor. 15:20), and those over whom He rules will not see death, as did those who died and rose before, but will live eternally.* He is 'prince of kings,' as *King of kings and Lord of lords* (I Tim. 6:15), equal in might to the Father and one in essence with Him" (St. Andrew, ch. 1).

1:5-6 *Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

"Kings and priests" are to be understood here not in the strict meaning, of course, but in the sense in which God has promised this to His chosen people through the prophets (Exodus 19:6); that is, He has made us, the true believers, to be the best, the holiest people, which is the same thing that a priest and king are with relation to the rest of mankind. †

---

* St. Athanasius the Great interprets this passage as follows: "He is said to be 'the First-begotten from the dead,' not that he died before us, for we had died first; but because having undergone death for us and abolished it, He was the first to rise as man, for our sake raising His own Body. Henceforth, He having risen, we too from Him and because of Him rise in due course from the dead" (*Second Discourse Against the Arians*, ch. 21, Eerdmans tr., p. 381). (*Translator*).

† St. Peter in his first catholic epistle also speaks of Christians as "a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (I Peter 2:9) in the sense that they have direct access to God, as only priests did—and that imperfectly—in the Old Testa-

1:7 *Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.*

Here is depicted the second glorious coming of Christ, in complete agreement with the depiction of this coming in the Gospels (compare Matt. 24:30 and 25:31; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; see also John 19:37). After the greeting (in the first verses of the book), in this verse the holy Apostle immediately speaks of the Second Coming of Christ and of the Last Judgment in order to signify the *chief theme* of this book; this is done in order to prepare readers to accept the great and fearful revelations which he has received about this.

1:7-8 *Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*

To confirm the unchangeableness and inevitability of the Second Coming and the Last Judgment of God, the holy Apostle adds on his own part: "Even so, Amen," and then testifies to the truth of this by indicating Him Who is the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending" of everything existing: The Lord Jesus Christ is the One alone Who is without beginning and without end, the cause of everything existing; He is eternal; He is the end and the aim towards which everything strives.*

---

ment. By this, of course, he does not deny the specific office of priesthood in the New Testament, as modern sectarians do; in this specific sense, only those ordained to the office of priesthood can be ministers of God's grace through the Holy Mysteries. (*Translator*).

* In verse 4 above the words "Which is, and which was, and which is to come" refer to the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, as explained by St. Andrew; this is clear because the same sentence continues (in verse 5), "and from Jesus Christ." Here, however, with the addition of the words "the Almighty," the same words refer to One Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, and are used by St. Gregory the Theologian in his treatise "On the Son" as a proof that Jesus Christ is truly God (*Third Theological Oration*, ch. 17; Eerdmans translation, p. 307). St. Athanasius the Great, in his *First Discourse Against the Arians*, uses the same quote from the Apocalypse to prove the same thing (Ch. 4, Eerdmans tr., p. 312). Concerning this St. Andrew says in his Commentary (ch. 1), "The divinely-splendid words are fitting equally for each of the Persons separately and for All together." (*Translator.*)

1:9 *I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

As for the means by which he was given revelations, St. John indicates first of all the place where he was vouchsafed to receive them. This is the island Patmos, one of the Sporades islands in the Aegean Sea, a desert and precipitous place 40 miles in circumference, located between the island of Icaria and the Cape of Miletus, little inhabited because of the lack of water, the unhealthy climate and the barrenness of the earth. In a cave in a certain mountain, even now there is indicated the place where St. John received the revelations. Here there is a small Greek monastery, called "the Monastery of the Apocalypse."

In the same verse there is mentioned also the time when St. John received the Apocalypse. This was at the time when St. John was in exile on the island of Patmos, in his own expression, "for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ," that is, for his fervent apostolic preaching of Jesus Christ. The fiercest persecution against Christians in the first century was under Emperor Nero. Tradition says that St. John first of all was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil, out of which he came unharmed and with renewed strength. The expression "in tribulation," according to the meaning of the original Greek expression, signifies here the "suffering" which occurred from persecution and torment—the same thing as "martyrdom."

1:10 *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.*

In this verse St. John gives the very day on which he was vouchsafed the revelations. This was "the Lord's day" (in Greek, *Kyriaki imera*), which is Sunday.* This was the first day of the week, which the Jews called *mia savvaton*, that is, "the first day after Saturday"; but the Christians called it "the Lord's day" in honor of the Resurrected Lord. The very existence of such a name already indicates

* The same expression is still used for Sunday in modern Greek.

that the Christians celebrated this day in place of the Old Testament Sabbath.

Having mentioned the place and time, St. John indicates likewise his own condition, in which he was vouchsafed the apocalyptic visions. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," he says. In the language of prophets, "to be in the Spirit" is to be in the spiritual condition when a man sees, hears and feels not with his bodily organs, but with all his inward being. This is not a dream, for such a condition occurs also when one is awake.

In such an extraordinary condition of his spirit, St. John heard a loud voice as of a trumpet:

1:11 *Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, what thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*

There follow the descriptions of four visions, according to which many divide the contents of the Apocalypse into four chief parts: The first vision is set forth from chapter one, verse 12, through chapter three; the second vision, in chapters four through eleven; the third vision, in chapters twelve through fourteen; and the fourth vision, in chapters fifteen through twenty-two.

The first vision is the apparition to St. John of a certain one "like unto the Son of Man" (v. 13). The loud voice, like that of a trumpet, which John heard behind him, belonged to Him. He called Himself not in Hebrew, but in Greek: "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." To the Jews in the Old Testament He revealed Himself under the name "Jehovah," which signifies, "He that exists from the beginning," or "He that Is"; but here He calls Himself by the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, indicating by this that He contains within Himself, like the Father, everything existing in all the manifestations of being from the beginning to the end. It is characteristic that He declares Himself here as it were under a new name, and it is a Greek name. "Alpha and Omega," as if desiring to show that He is the Messiah for all peoples, who at that time spoke everywhere the Greek language and used the Greek written language.

The revelation is given to the seven churches comprising the metropolia of Ephesus, which St. John the Theologian then governed, having his permanent dwelling in Ephesus. But of course, in the person of these seven churches the revelation is given also to the whole Church. The number seven, moreover, has a mystical meaning, signifying completeness. Therefore it may be placed here as a symbol of the Ecumenical Church, to which as a whole the Apocalypse is addressed.

1:12-13 *And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*

In the 12th to 16th verses is described the outward appearance of the One Who appeared to John "like unto the Son of Man." He stood in the midst of seven candlesticks, symbolizing the seven churches (as explained below, verse 20), and was clothed in a "garment down to the foot"—the *ephod*, the long garment of the Jewish chief priests (Ex. 28:31). He was, like kings, girded about the breast with a golden belt. These features indicate the high-priestly and royal dignity of the One Who appeared.

"The voice which the Apostle heard was not sensory. This he makes clear by the word 'turned': That is, he turned not in order to hear it, but to *see* it; for spiritual hearing and seeing signify one and the same thing" (St. Andrew, ch. 2).

1:14 *His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire.*

Whiteness of the hair serves usually as a sign of old age. This sign testifies that the Son of Man Who appeared is one with the Father, that He is the same as the "Ancient of Days" Whom the holy prophet Daniel also beheld in a mystical vision (Dan. 7:13), that He is the same eternal God as is God the Father.* His eyes were

---

* The Orthodox church service for the Meeting of the Lord (Feb. 2) identifies the "Ancient of Days" with God the Son ("The Ancient of Days appears this day as a babe"). Thus, in this interpretation, when Daniel beheld the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man together, it was a vision of the Divine and human

like a fiery flame, which signifies His Divine zeal for the salvation of the human race, that before His glance there is nothing hidden or dark, and that He is flaming with anger against every iniquity.

1:15 *And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace.*

Brass is a precious metallic mixture with a fiery red or golden yellow sheen (compare Daniel 10:6).

"The feet are the Apostles, as the support of the church. . . The feet of Christ are the Apostles, who have been heated, in emulation of Christ, in the furnace of temptations" (St. Andrew, ch. 2).

1:15 *And His voice as the sound of many waters.*

That is, His voice was like the voice of a threatening judge who strikes with trembling the disturbed souls of condemned men.

1:16 *And He had in His right hand seven stars.*

According to the explanation given to John by the One Who appears, these seven stars signify the seven representatives of the churches, or bishops, called here the "angels of the churches." By this we are told that the Lord Jesus holds in His right hand the shepherds of the Church.

1:16 *And out of His mouth went a sharp two edged sword.*

This symbolizes the all-penetrating power of the word which comes from the mouth of God (compare Heb. 4:12).

---

natures of Christ. Some Fathers, however, understand the Ancient of Days to be God the Father; in this case, the vision is of Two Persons of the Holy Trinity, and as St. John Chrysostom says in his commentary on Daniel, this prophet "was the first and only one (in the Old Testament) to see the Father and the Son, as if in a vision." For the devout student of Scripture, of course, there is no "contradiction" between these two interpretations; in such mystical visions we do not see a "literal picture" of the Godhead (such as to believe that God is really an "old man"), but only a hint of Divine mysteries. Thus, in his commentary on this same passage of Daniel, St. John Chrysostom adds: "Do not seek clarity in prophecies, where there are shadows and riddles, just as in lightning you do not seek a constant light, but are satisfied that it only flashes momentarily." (*Translator.*)

1:16 *And His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

This is an image of that unutterable glory of God by which the Lord shone on Mount Tabor (Matt. 17:2). All these characteristics present to us the whole image of the fearful Judge, Chief Priest and King, as the Lord Jesus Christ will one day appear on earth in His Second Coming to judge the living and the dead.

1:17 *And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.*

From this one may conclude that the beloved disciple, who had once lain on the breast of Jesus, did not recognize in the One Who had appeared a single familiar feature. And this is not surprising; for if the disciples did not easily recognize their Lord after His Resurrection in His glorified body on earth, all the more difficult would it be to recognize Him in this resplendent heavenly glory.

1:17-18 *And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the First and the Last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

From these words St. John had to understand that the One Who appeared was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, and that his appearance could not be fatal for the Apostle, but on the contrary would be lifegiving. To have the keys to something signified among the Jews to receive authority over something. Thus, "the keys of hell and of death" signify authority over the death of the body and the soul.*

1:19-20 *Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; the mystery of the*

---

* One might add here that Christ has authority over hell and death in that He Himself tasted of death in the body and descended to hell in His soul after death (I Peter 3:19), but in His Resurrection gained victory over both. The Divine services of the Orthodox Church are full of this teaching; for example: "O Lord our Saviour, Who hast taken hell captive and trampled on death. . ." (*Octoechos*, Tone 5, Sunday Vespers, "Lord I have cried.") (*Translator.*)

seven stars which thou sawest in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

In conclusion, the One Who had appeared commands John to write down that which he has seen and what is to be, explaining that the seven stars are the angels or the representatives of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks signify these churches themselves.

"Since Christ is *the true Light* (John 1:9), those who have become enriched by His illumination are like candlesticks which illuminate the darkness of the present life" (St. Andrew, ch. 2).

SCRIPTURE PARALLELS IN CHAPTER ONE

II Peter 3:3-4, 8-10. *There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying: Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. . . .But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. . .*

Mark 13:32. *But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.*

John 5:20. *The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth; and He will show Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.*

Tobit 12:15. *I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels who present the prayers of the saints and enter into the presence of the glory of the Holy One* (Sept.).

Isaiah 11:3. *The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord* (KJV).

Colossians 1:18. Christ *is the beginning, the first born from the dead.*

I Corinthians 15:20-21. *Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.*

Exodus 19:6. *And ye shall be to Me a royal priesthood and a holy nation* (Sept.).

I Peter 2:9. *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*

Matthew 24:30. *And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

Matthew 25:31-32. *When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations.*

John 19:37. *And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.*

Zechariah 12:10. *And they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn* (KJV).

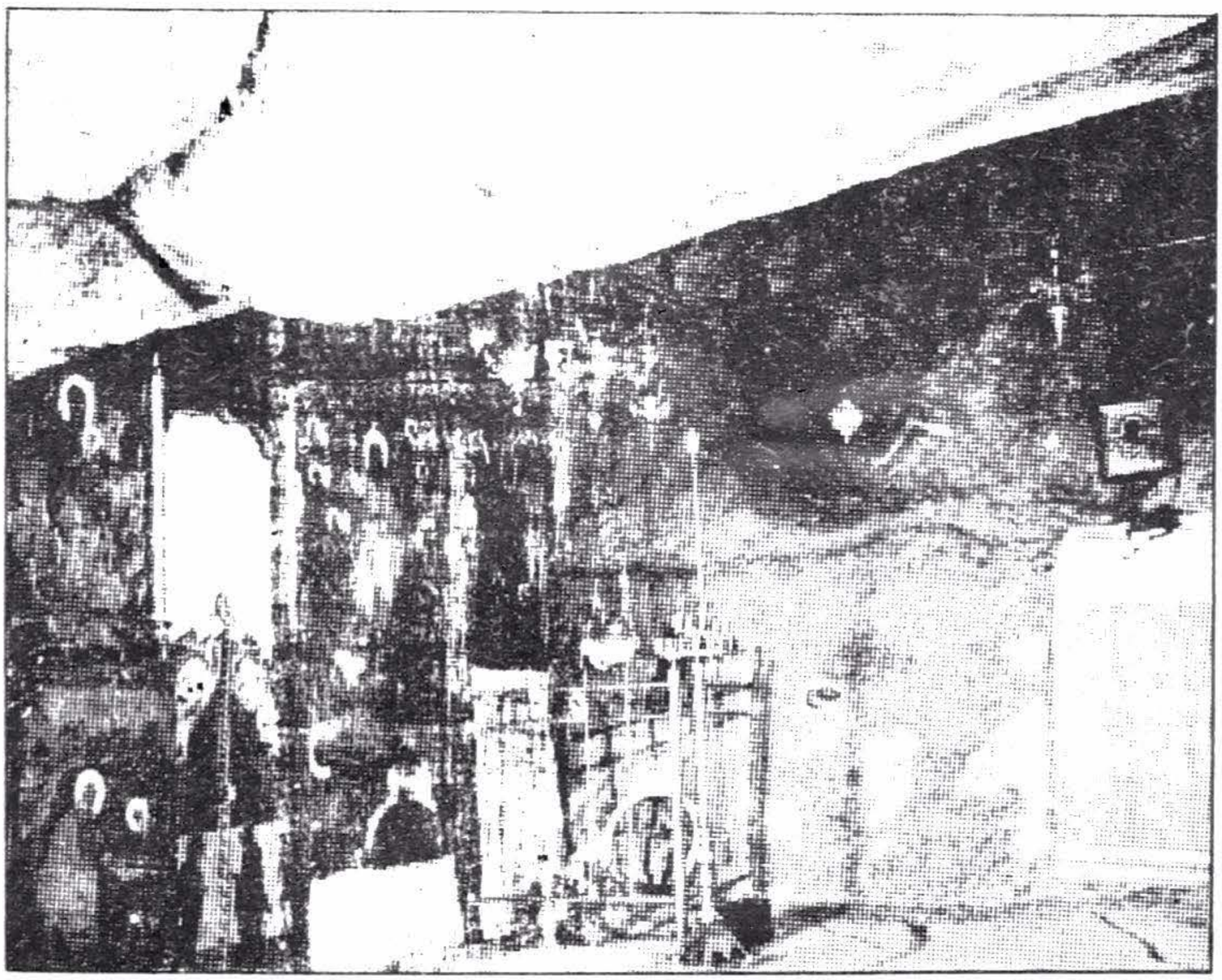
Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14. *I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, Whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool; His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. . . . And behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed* (KJV).

Daniel 10:5-6. *Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with*

fine gold of Uphaz. His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude (KJV).

Hebrews 4:12. *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Matthew 17:1-2. *And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.*



The cave on Patmos

THE FIRST VISION OF THE APOCALYPSE

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION
(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Title of publication: *The Orthodox Word*
2. Date of filing: May 6, 1982
3. Frequency of issue: Bimonthly
3A. No. of issues published annually: 6
3B. Annual subscription price: $8
4. Location of known office of publication: Beegum Gorge Road, Platina, CA 96076
5. Location of headquarters or general business offices of publishers: Same as above.
6. Names and addresses of publishers, editor, and managing editor:
   Publisher: The Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, CA
   Editors: Father Herman and Father Seraphim, both of Platina, CA
   Managing Editor: Father Seraphim, Platina, CA
7. Owner: The Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, CA 96076
   (Father Herman and Father Seraphim, Platina, CA 96076)
8. Known bondholders, mortgages, and other security holders: None
9. For optional completion: Not applicable
10. Extent and nature of circulation:

		Actual no. last issue
A. Total no. copies printed	3350	3450
B. Paid circulation		
1. Sales through dealers and carriers, etc.	250	250
2. Mail subscriptions	2336	2380
C. Total paid circulation	2586	2630
D. Free distribution, samples, complimentary	97	117
E. Total distribution (sum of C and D)	2683	2747
F. Copies not distributed		
1. Office use, left over, spoiled after printing	667	703
2. Returns from news agents	0	0
G. Total (sum of E and F)	3350	3450

11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

(Signature) *Father Seraphim*